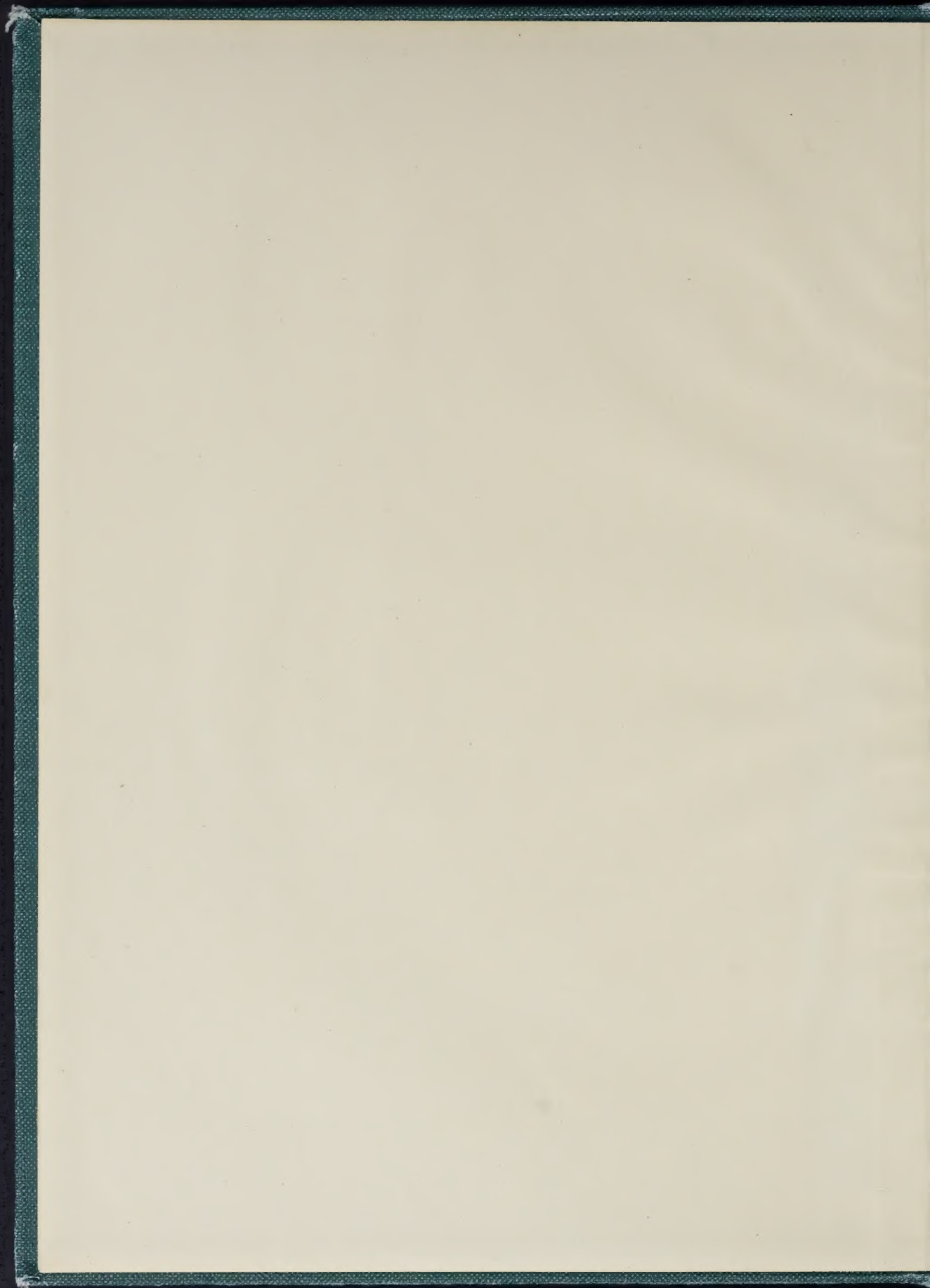


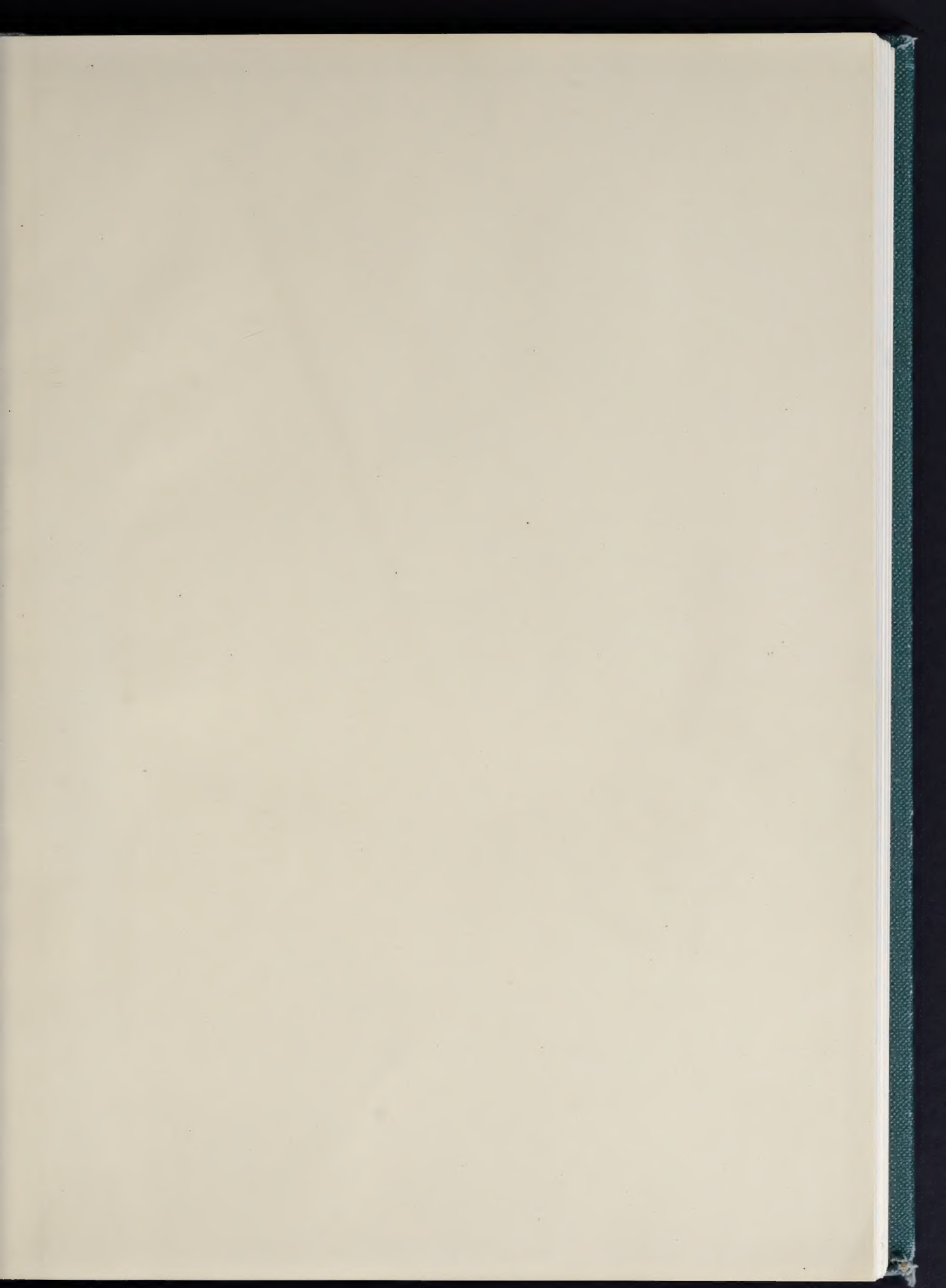
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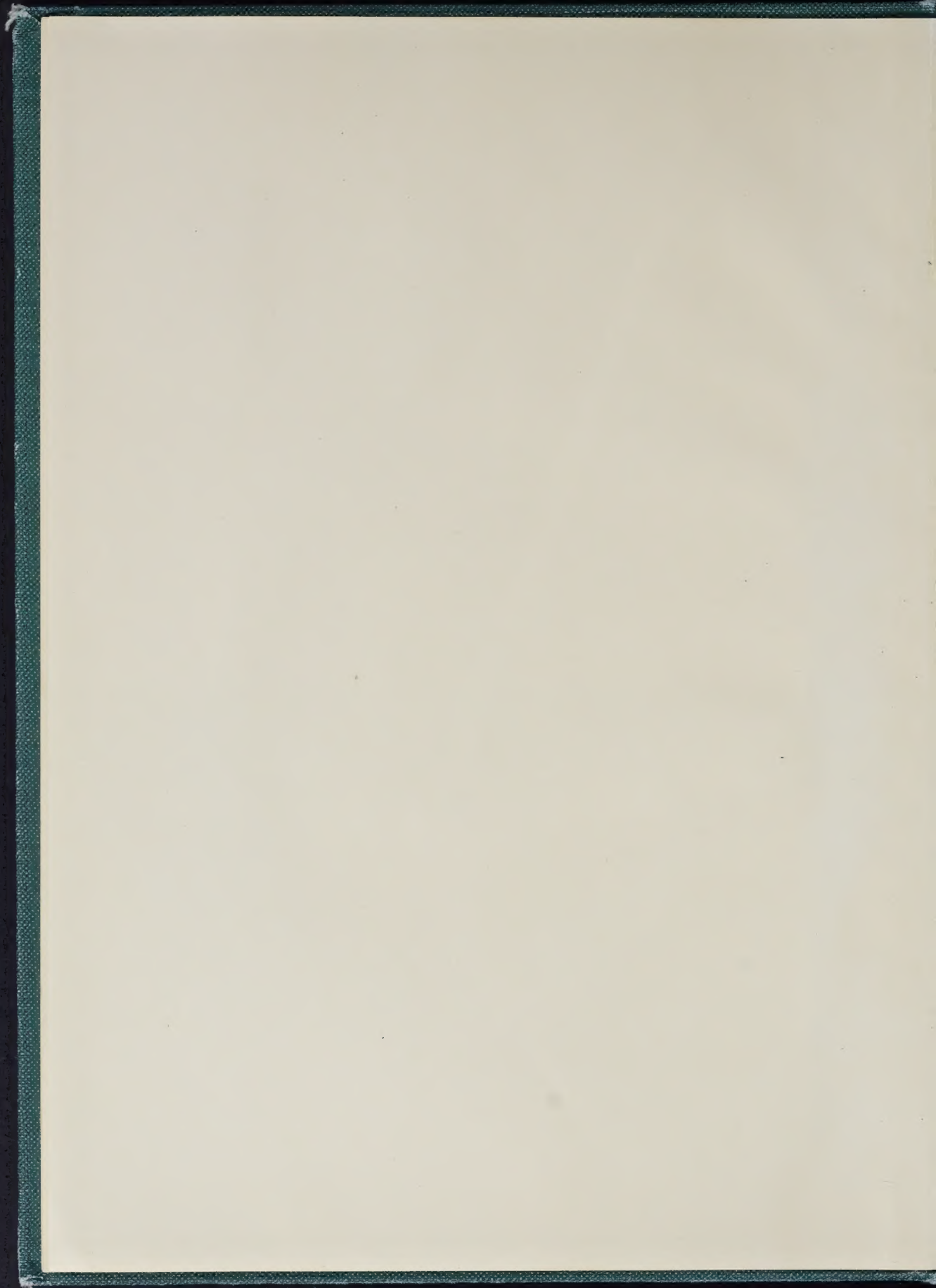
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A HISTORY OF
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A HISTORY OF ITALIAN FURNITURE

FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO THE
EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES

BY
WILLIAM M. ODOM



VOLUME II

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A HISTORY OF
ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 1. WALNUT CREDENZA, NORTH CENTRAL ITALY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
 COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

CHAPTER I

THE BAROQUE STYLES

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



THE Italian decorative arts of the seventeenth century, like the social life which they served, were the outcome of standards imposed upon Italy in the second quarter of the sixteenth century when the invading and devastating armies of the ascendent European powers, reducing her to a state of bondage and general wretchedness, dispelled the brilliant civilization of the Renaissance. Throughout the greater part of the seventeenth century these impositions became aggravated. Harassed by intriguing foreign treaties, disintegrated by bribe, internal jealousies, and petty foreign invasions, she was subject to an even more bewildering confusion of alien influences that further debased the newly established social life, while it imposed more exaggerated standards upon all aesthetic expression.

As the art of the High Renaissance was the perfection of that virile, energetic, and cheerful idealism of the Quattrocento, so the Baroque art of the seventeenth century was a continuation and culmination of that of the later sixteenth century, after foreign invasion, Spanish and Papal preponderance had imposed upon the expression its brutality, its despair, and its fanaticism. The insane, meretricious architecture and sculpture of the Jesuit Churches, the pompous palaces and villas of the nobility, the ecstatic and theatrical emotionalism of the Bolognese school of painting and those wild and extravagant literary affectations of the Marini school are expressions of the full maturity or the complete debasement of the declining Renaissance. The true spirit of the Renaissance genius seemed to lie dormant under "the huge rotting mass of dead Spain" except when it occasionally lifted its satirical voice in the ignominy and buffoonery of the "Comedy of Masks."



FIG. 2. WALNUT CREDENZA WITH BRONZE HANDLES. BOLOGNA, ABOUT 1600
THE PROPERTY OF CHAS. A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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It was about the middle of the seventeenth century, at the time Spanish domination was at the maximum of its power, that the Baroque style reached its culmination. Though the Italian expression never fell to the same state of insanity that the style did in Spain, yet its chief aim and ambition throughout the first half of the century was but to give life and movement to materials, to surprise and amaze by its novelty, its originality, and its daring. According to the ideals of the Baroque poet Cavalieri Marino

"E del poeta il fin la meraviglia
Chi non sa far stupir vada alla striglia."

This intense revolt of individualism against classicism was considerably augmented by the liturgy of the Roman Church which, after the Council of Trent, encouraging an exaggerated and pompous performance and a mania for the theatrical, while it attempted to reach the spirit through the senses, stimulated art to exuberant inventiveness and to extravagant ornamentation. A greater factor, however, was that of the Jesuit societies whose enormous revenues enabled them to plan and decorate their churches and other religious edifices upon a scale commensurate with their mania for bizarre display, calculated to impress upon the popular mind the power, enthusiasm, and modernity of their order. To this purpose no inconsiderable part of their persistent energies was directed, promoting the most rapid and exotic growth of the style.

Yet, however debased the art of this period may seem to be to the host of Victorian critics, to the more tolerant judgment there appears to be a vigorous decorative quality in much of this ingenuous Baroque invention that supplied Europe with most of its motifs for decoration during the greater part of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. "In spite of disturbed horizontal lines, contorted columns, whimsically curved mouldings, ungraceful architraves and ponderous attics combined with awkward volutes, and all over laden with excessive and confused ornamentation," there is, as Mølmenti claims, "a sense of triumphal grandeur about the whole that compels admiration and we forget the violation of rules and the debasement of the ancient orders." At its best it is like a splendid pantomime. Out-of-doors it achieves its finest decorative results in the magnificent old gardens of the villas, in the public

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fountains of Rome, as well as in the façades of the numerous palaces and churches that give to the many Italian towns their animated charm.

No period of art that expresses so adequately the life of an age could be quite without sincerity and worth, even though the fashion of the day was to mistake extravagance for the picturesque until the decorative and exceptional became the conventional. The frank acceptance of these very excesses often became a mark of genuine feeling in the work of the greater masters. And the furniture design was no less sincere, for when we associate it with palaces animated by sinuous curves and redundant masses of decoration, garrisoned

with a retinue of retainers in the most gorgeous of liveries; or with equally splendid villas surrounded by gardens filled with agitated statues, fantastic fountains, and stone terraces forming a background for cardinals in flaming red silks, for haughty dames in stiff brocades, weird head-dresses and exaggerated jewels, and even those processions of gilded coaches transporting these stilted, decorative personages through the colourful squalor of the peasants and lower classes, it becomes a part of a homogeneous mass, perhaps more triumphant in its ensemble than graceful in its detail.



FIG. 3. WROUGHT IRON AND BRONZE TORCHÈRES.
TUSCAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE PERUZZI-MEDICI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

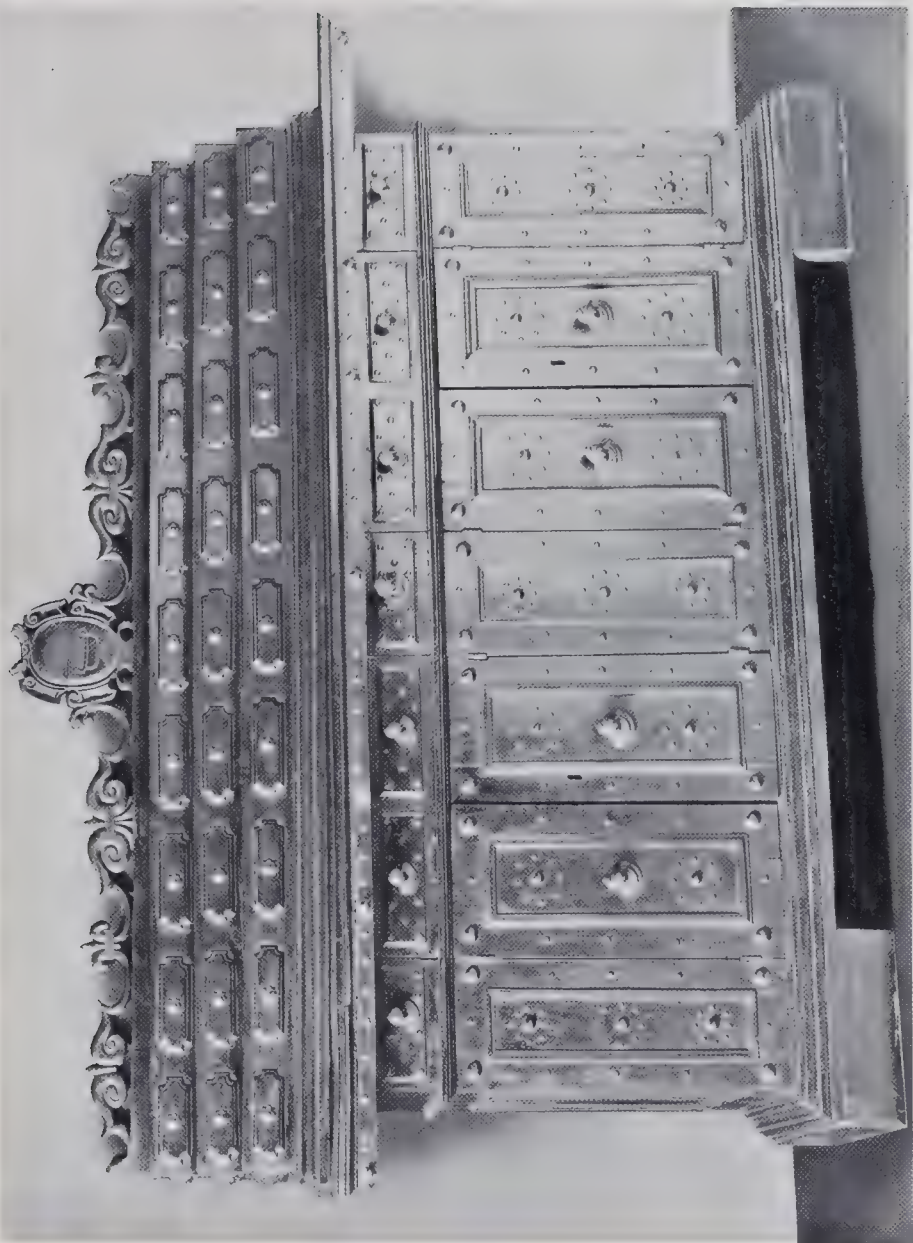


FIG. 4. WALNUT CREDENZA WITH BRONZE HANDLES. FROM THE VICINITY OF FLORENCE, EARLY XVII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF W. HINCKLE SMITH, PHILADELPHIA, PENN.



FIG. 5. CARVED WOOD ARMOIRE. PARMA, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO D'ANTICHITÀ, PARMA



FIG. 6. CARVED-WOOD ARMOIRE. PARMA, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO D'ANTICHITÀ, PARMA

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FIG. 7. CANDLE STICK, BRONZE AND AMBER,
FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF CONTI MINUTOLI, LUCCA

It must also be remembered that it was during this period of Spanish repression and exhausted repose "among these languid, pompous, artificial people of the seventeenth century that modern society began to be formed, and it is in dealing with them that we first find that we have to do no longer with our remote ancestors, living in castellated houses, traveling on horseback, fighting in streets, and carousing at banquets; but with the grandfathers of our grandfathers, steady, formal, hypocritical people, paying visits in coaches, going to operas, giving dinner parties and litigating and slandering rather than assassinating and poisoning."

But in a decade or two, just after the middle of the century, when the style seemed to weary of

its inanity and when sensationalism had run its course, the Spanish influence was gradually supplanted by that of the French; this influence by the close of the century, under the dominating personality of Louis XIV., had inclined nearly the whole of the art of Europe toward the Baroque-Palladian style that had been so homogeneously developed by the artists of France under the efficient encouragement of Colbert. The more congenial influence of the French began to restore to the Italian arts much of the cheerful spontaneity of the Renaissance genius. While not on the same high intellectual and aristocratic plane, it nevertheless fostered and encouraged that quality that makes

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enchancing the cruder and more frivolous products of the eighteenth century.

With the decline of Spanish power the stilted and grandiose manner of Italian society gave way to a more genial atmosphere in which manners were less rigid, dress gayer and the outlook on life more intelligent and liberal. The courts were no longer oppressed by Spanish gloom and hypocrisy; they strove instead to imitate their contemporaries at Versailles, whose brilliance they were too impoverished to attain, yet whose frivolity, artificiality, and looseness of morals they successfully assimilated.



FIG. 8. INLAID CABINET. FLORENTINE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE PITTI PALACE, FLORENCE

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Rome was the cradle of the Baroque style. A Papacy, revived and at the same time deprived of much of its former spiritual authority and temporal power, found in the pomp of the declining arts an adequate expression for her pontifical monarchs to hide from the world, if not from themselves, the precariousness of their sway. For the rest, these were years of peace; and while the vilest conditions existed in the morals of the people, under the rule of the most corrupt of governments, "the increasing passion for luxury and show in the idle and worthless princes and in the sumptuous and ambitious cardinals, united with public tranquillity to favour the arts and to render Rome under Urban VIII., as she had been under Julius II., the great studio of Europe." No longer did she merely offer opportunities for the culminating efforts of a great artistic school, she now became an emanating centre in which Baroque art became "a fixed resident rather than an honoured guest."

Here the style may be judged at its best as well as at its worst; at its



FIG. 9. PAIR OF WALNUT PRIE-DIEU. VENETIAN, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF SIG. LUIGI ORSELLI, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 10. CABINET WITH INLAY DECORATIONS. VENETIAN, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSÉE JACQUEMART ANDRÉ, PARIS

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FIG. 11. PEDESTAL OF COMPOSITION, GILDED. ABOUT 1600

FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 12. CARVED WOOD PEDESTAL. EARLY XVII CENTURY

best in the work of Bernini, the Michael Angelo of the Seicento, to whom even the most prejudiced critics have conceded one moment of genius when he set up that imposing colonnade to St. Peter's. Though not so active in the designing of palaces as the well known Borromini and Rainaldi, yet the art

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FIG. 13. CARVED AND GILDED PEDESTAL.
ABOUT 1600



FIG. 14. CARVED WOOD PEDESTAL. ABOUT
1600

FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

of Rome is so enthralled in the superabundant energy of this genius that his monumental efforts sum up the vital characteristics of the style, and influence even the details of the decorations and furnishings of the palaces. "A fawning courtier in the salons of princes, Bernini was at Rome, like Le Brun in Paris, a tyrant to the arts."

Rome had been greatly depopulated and impoverished by the invasion in the early sixteenth century, but by this time a new society formed from the

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Papal families and the Montesti had again enriched the city, and the population of forty thousand that survived the invasion had been brought up to one hundred and twenty thousand. As early as the last decades of the sixteenth century, when the Baroque fashion had already greatly transformed the art and manners of the Italians, Montaigne noticed that "the city is all for the



FIG. 15. CARVED AND GILDED BED. ABOUT 1600
FROM THE DAVANZATI PALACE COLLECTION, FLORENCE

courts and the nobility, every one adapting himself to the ease and idleness of the ecclesiastical surroundings." There were no main streets of trade and what there were "would seem small in a small town. Palaces and gardens take up all the space." But in the seventeenth century this monopoly by the Papal aristocracy and the luxury loving ecclesiastics grew ever more pronounced. After accumulating vast fortunes the Seicento Popes became

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insatiable Baroque builders. "The possessions of the Peretti, the Aldobrandini, the Borghese and the Ludovisi," writes a contemporary, "with their principalities, their enormous revenues, so many magnificent edifices, such superb furniture, decorations and rare pleasure grounds, surpass not only the state of nobles and princes, not sovereign, but approach that of kings themselves." The Borghese alone acquired eighty estates in the Campagna, the Aldobrandini were equally fortunate, while the Barberini surpassed them all in the accumulation of wealth, controlling the sum of twenty-six million pounds during their pontificates. The Chigi, Odescalchi, Albani and others who belonged to this century, all contributed to the profligate display of pompous Baroque luxury.



FIG. 16. CARVED WALNUT BED. VENETIAN, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF SIG. ANTONIO SALVADORI, VENICE

Museums and galleries were numerous, lovely villas were scattered over the Alban and Tusculum Hills and magnificent town palaces such as the Rospigliosi (1603), Barberini (1629), Pamfili (1650), and Altieri (1670), were erected, while many of the earlier ones of the Renaissance were being re-decorated and furnished in the new pompous style. Gibbon, the Roman historian, may justly call these edifices "the most costly monuments of elegance and servitude, the perfect arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture having been prostituted in their service, and their galleries and gardens decorated with the most precious works of antiquity which taste and variety have prompted them to collect."

Venice, the sole survivor of mediaeval republicanism, was still acknowl-

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edged among the powers of Europe. Weakened by loss of territory, idle luxury and dissipation, she endeavoured to maintain her dignity and freedom in spite of Spain and the Papacy. Perhaps in no other city of Italy has the Baroque style left a more agreeable and characteristic imprint. While



FIG. 17. WALNUT CREDENZA. TUSCAN, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF ALFRED VILLARES, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

Genoa, the capital of the richest state in Europe at this time, was being improved with new streets, more uniformly graced with Late Renaissance and Baroque palaces, the Venetian builders were rearing on canals already lined with fanciful Gothic palaces, their daring Baroque work. Side by side with masterpieces of the Bons, the Bregnos, the Lombardi and Rizzi, it rose, not

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changing the essential character of Renaissance Venice, but blending with it in pleasing variety.

At Florence, the sumptuous and autocratic Medici, the Inquisition with its dreaded power and horror, and the influx of foreign taste, especially that of the Flemish, all following the rigid Spanish mode inaugurated by Cosimo



FIG. 18. CREDENZA. FLORENTINE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

I. in the preceding century, combine in imposing upon the art and social life of this period an influence equally uncongenial and degrading to the true Florentine spirit. Though sumptuousity was the prevailing and debasing characteristic of all seventeenth century European art, it expressed itself in an especially dull and cumbrous form in the notable examples of Florentine decoration and furnishings of this period.

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FIG. 19. CARVED AND GILDED CANDLE STICKS.
SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

The pious and bigoted Maria Maddalena, Duchess of Cosimo II. (1609-20) and the regent, Duchess Christine, encouraged excessive pomp and splendour. A Medician biographer claims that "never before had such gorgeous magnificence been displayed by the court as now ensued under this rule. They were accompanied on all occasions by a numerous retinue arrayed in the richest costumes, were surrounded by every accessory which could add to their grandeur and seem to have considered it incumbent on them to make as splendid a display as possible in order to maintain in proper style the importance of the young Grand Duke (Ferdinand II. (1620-70) for whom they were Regents," and as may be added,

whom by his monkish education they delivered into the hands of the Jesuits, practically every office being in their power and in that of the Inquisition during his rule. Yet the splendour of the court increased, the Pitti Palace and the Poggio Imperiale becoming at this time centres of social amusement. The former was enlarged in 1640 to nearly double its size, providing a magnificent range of state apartments of about sixty richly furnished rooms, many with ceilings decorated by Piero Berettini da Cortona, Ciro Ferri, and others.

Lassels writing in the first half of the seventeenth century reveals to us a picture of the dull and pompous social life of Florence in a characteristic setting. "It is the custom here in winter," he says, "to invite the chief ladies

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of the town (married women only) to come to play at cards on winter evenings for three or four hours' space; and this one night in one palace, another night in another palace. In every chamber the doors are set open, and for the



FIG. 20. CREDENZA WITH INLAY DECORATIONS. BOLOGNA, ABOUT 1650
THE PROPERTY OF FRANK ALVAH PARSONS, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

most part you shall see eight or ten chambers on a floor, going out of one another, with a square table holding eight persons, as many chairs, two silver candle sticks with wax lights in them and a store of lights round about the room. At the hour appointed, company being come, they sit down to play, a cavalier sitting between every lady and all the women as fine in cloths and jewels as if they were going to a ball. The doors of all these rooms being open, the lights great, the women glittering and all glorious, you would take these palaces to be the enchanted palaces of the Old King of the Mountain."

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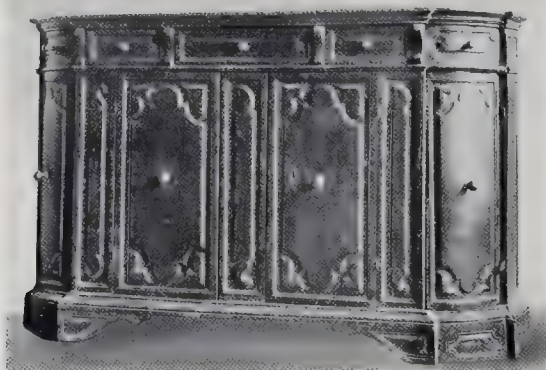


FIG. 21. CREDENZA. NORTH CENTRAL ITALY, ABOUT 1650
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

Beginning with this period the smaller centres became of greater artistic importance. With the exception of Venice, Rome, and Genoa, the picturesque little duchies, with their ornately furnished Baroque palaces, their gardens, fountains, and gilded coaches, their toy

armies gay with coloured trappings, produced some of the most characteristic furniture of this epoch, especially in the second half of the century, when the French influence was in the ascendent.

It was at the court of Turin through the favour of Christine, Duchess of Vittorio Amadeo I. (1630-37) and sister of Louis XIII. of France, that the domination of Spanish influence over Italian art and social life was first subjected to that of the French. In view of the fact that rival factions supported both France and Spain during Christine's rule, dividing the population and instigating civil strife, a reconciliation was finally effected and the persistence of her rule under French domination enabled her to maintain a gay and extravagant court, decidedly French in character and styled by one of the historians, "the home of fêtes and gallantry."

With the possible exception of Venice, it was at this court that the French fashion and manners of the court of Louis XIV. were first inaugurated in Italy, an inauguration that was to revolutionize all Italian art. Perhaps one of the first examples of French influence modifying the Baroque architecture of the Italians is that of the Castello del Valentino, a large palace erected by Christine about 1633 in a decidedly Gallic style. Undoubtedly the work of a French architect, perhaps that of some pupil of Salomon de Brosse, its

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every detail is thoroughly Italian in spirit in spite of its pavilion roofs and arcaded loggie around the fore-court. In Nugent's second edition of the "Grand Tour," published in 1756, he calls attention to "a charming walk of elms about a mile in length down to the banks of the Po, where there is a fine



FIG. 22. WRITING BUREAU. CENTRAL ITALY, ABOUT 1650
THE PROPERTY OF CHAS. A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

palace called Valentino, nobly furnished with paintings and rich hangings. In the apartments on the right hand are painted all sorts of flowers and in those on the left hand are all sorts of birds. Among the pictures in the other rooms, those which represent the four elements deserve a traveller's notice."

Christine's son, Carlo Emanuele II. (1637-75), insisted on keeping up a court modelled upon that of Versailles, ridiculously disproportionate to his position. He made himself further ridiculous in the eyes of Europe by his expenditure in endeavouring to obtain the "Trattamento Reale," that is, securing

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to himself and his ambassadors the same treatment by the foreign powers that would be accorded him if he were a king. Yet he was a great patron of art and literature, his rule being marked by prosperity and many improvements. Under his successor, Vittorio Amadeo II. (1675-1730), who married the French



FIG. 23. CHEST OF DRAWERS WITH WRITING COMPARTMENT. ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF R. L. AGASSIZ, ESQ., BOSTON, MASS.

princess Anne of Orleans, French modes and manners still remained in such high favour that when Misson was in Turin about 1688 he remarked that, "with respect to the manner of living, Turin is not inferior to the politest cities in France; the language of that kingdom is as commonly spoken here as the Italian; the people are generally well-bred and handsome and there is not a Court in Europe more sprightly and gay than that of the Duke of Savoy."

Less French but not less pompous was the court at Parma, a Papal possession with a Farnese duke. Lassels remarks the display of this court, "In

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FIG. 24. SHOWING FIG. 23 WHEN CLOSED

fact," he says, "the chief thing to be seen in Parma is the Duke's palace, with its gardens and fountains and its admirable theatre in which operas are given." He is also greatly impressed by the extravagance and gorgeousness of the coaches, one of which

is "all of beaten silver with the cushions and curtains embroidered in gold and silver," while another is "so well gilt and adorned that it is almost as rich as the former."

The Dukes of Modena also maintained an ambitious little court, rife with intrigues and extravagance and a toy army in gorgeous uniforms. Francesco I., "a prime minister of great sense with high talents, and no small ambitions," married his son to Laura Martinozzi, thus entering the family circle of Mazarin, while his daughter, Princess Mary, became the Queen of James II. of England.

Among the older centres of culture,



FIG. 25. CHEST OF DRAWERS WITH INLAY DECORATIONS. BOLOGNA, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE PALACE OF COUNT GOZZADINI, BOLOGNA

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with their traditions of the Renaissance stronger, yet contributing to this period, may be cited Verona, Perugia, and Bologna, the last named a Papal state, especially rich in Baroque work. For the seventeenth century palaces at Udine, Treviso, Bassano, and Lucca and for the villas on the Lake of Como sufficient



FIG. 26. CHEST OF DRAWERS. LOMBARDY, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

work of importance was executed to include their products in the study of the furniture of this period. Even Milan, with her art and commerce almost annihilated under Spanish repression, erected a few important palaces in the first half of the century, for which no doubt furnishings in the debased seventeenth century manner were designed.

Naples abounds in the most exaggerated work of this period, yet it is confined almost wholly to ecclesiastical expression and to the palaces of the nobles. Here the mode of life throughout the seventeenth and the greater

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part of the eighteenth centuries remained completely Spanish, resulting in the fact that the Neapolitan masses, living in the most degraded poverty, mesmerized by the almost barbaric gorgeousness of the Church and its ceremony, at the same time awed by the ostentatious display of the nobles,



FIG. 27. EBONIZED CHEST OF DRAWERS WITH INLAY DECORATIONS. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1650-60
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

enjoyed little of that domestic comfort and refinement that was evident among the middle classes of Tuscany, Venetia, and other provinces. As in Rome, all domestic artistic expression was confined to, and lavished on, the environment of the noble.

Neapolitan palaces were sumptuously furnished; costliness of materials was, however, the criterion. During the rebellion of 1647 over forty palaces are said to have been burned or sacked. Hangings of gold brocade, Arras carpets with composition of many figures, rare pictures, gold and silver plate, in addition to much magnificent furniture, were

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ruthlessly destroyed. The plate alone, taken from the Palace of the Madaloni in the Borgo de' Vergini, was said to have been valued at more than ten thousand scudi.

A striking exception to these southern conditions is evinced in the



FIG. 28. CHEST OF DRAWERS WITH PANELS IN GILDED RELIEF. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

little town of Lecce, a veritable seventeenth century museum, near the shores of the Adriatic, called by M. Paul Bourget, "a precious jewel of a town." Mr. Martin Briggs, in his "Baroque Architecture," tells us that "here one may study far better than in Rome the vernacular architecture of the period, for seventeenth century Rome was full of officials herded together in 'colleges' and palaces, whereas Lecce, though abounding in

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clerics, retained its own domestic life. So, though Spanish grandees may have occupied one or two of its stately mansions, we may reasonably attribute Lecce's chief architectural attractions—its quaint little street fronts and sunny courtyards—to the prosperity of its merchants and professional men. No doubt Spanish manners helped to produce a love of heraldry at



FIG. 29. CARVED WOOD CHEST OF DRAWERS. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

every possible corner, of enormous portals to comparatively small houses, and so on; but in this case the influence has added to the interest. The infinite variety of design in so small a place shows the possibilities of Baroque as useful architecture compatible with ordinary life."

The villa and the villeggiatura had now become a convention of Italian society, caprice, affectation, and the most reckless extravagance succeeding the more healthy emotion the Cinquecento patricians felt for their

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country life. It was during this period and in the late sixteenth century that practically all of the celebrated villas that grace Italy to-day were built, as well as many of those that have long since been destroyed. That built by Baldassare Longhena for the Da Lezze family at Rovere on the Callalta in the Trivigiano is one example, magnificent with stately stairs and loggie, halls adorned with statues and stucco, and delightful gardens with long rows of citron houses. Throughout the peninsula the craze for Baroque villas prevailed, but those of the Venetians and Romans were the most elaborate and imposing and for these were designed much of the important furniture of this style. At Venice the laws of the sixteenth century curtailing extravagance in furnishing and maintaining the villa being relaxed, the nobles became more



FIG. 30. EBONIZED CABINET WITH INLAY DECORATIONS OF TIN. FLORENTINE, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE LOUVRE COLLECTION, PARIS

ITALIAN FURNITURE

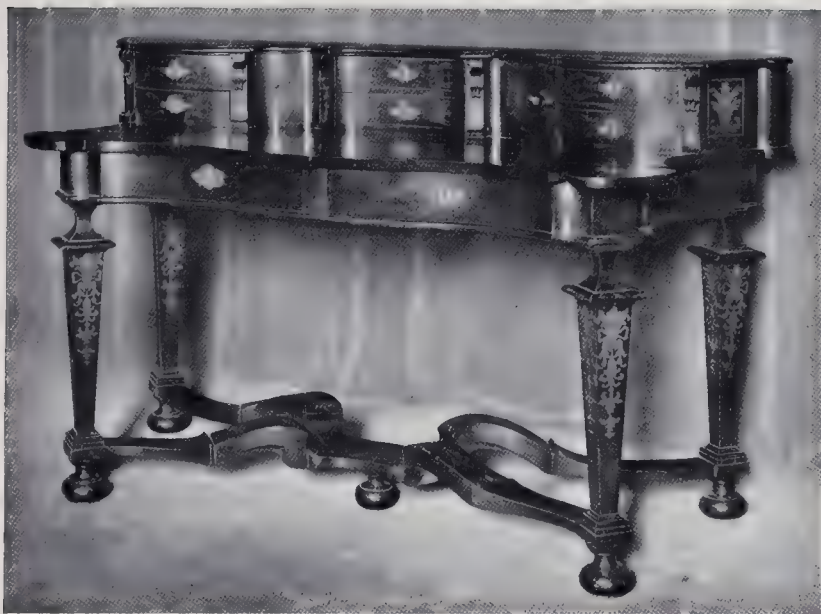


FIG. 31. INLAID WALNUT WRITING DESK. FLORENTINE, ABOUT 1700
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

reckless than ever in expenditure. Numerous Cinquecento villas were altered to meet the new social requirements and many were added to, redecorated, or refurnished in the Baroque style. For example, the magnificent villa built by Palladio for the Contarini at Piazzolo, ten miles from Padua, was enlarged and redecorated after the middle of the seventeenth century, the new architect, Marco Contarini, adding to the simple lines of the old building redundant masses of decoration. The main block contained eighty rooms, great halls and fine galleries which were adorned with columns and statues. The music room contained an extensive musical library and a collection of spinets, harps, violins and other instruments, beautifully decorated with inlay and painting, while on the estate was a church with five organs, as well as two theatres, a printing press and a conservatory of music.

As an old English traveller has remarked, the Italian palaces are built

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FIG. 32. CARVED WOOD CLOCK,
PAINTED AND GILDED.
ABOUT 1700
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF
ART, NEW YORK CITY

rather for the spectator than the tenant, hence the elevation is more studied than the plan. However, the plan of both palace and villa was decidedly improved and showed a preference for the large chamber and small cabinet. The entrance with its super-structure, displaying a vigorous armorial bearing which often played havoc with the pediment, led into a large square courtyard with arcades similar to those of Renaissance times. When lack of space prevented this arrangement the atrium was succeeded by a smaller court, in the wall of which, facing the entrance, were niches with sculpture or a fountain; often landscapes with architectural perspectives were painted on these walls to increase by their optical illusion the apparent size.

Stairs were important and monumental, usurping perhaps more than their share of the interior. Their long easy flights led to the salon, the stately hall of the palace, where, if the prince had the right of canopy, stood the throne with its baldachino. The ceiling here was unusually lofty and generally rich with frescoes. From this hall, when it occupied, as it often did, the centre of the first floor plan, a succession of apartments opened in different directions, comfort being always sacrificed to stateliness and show. Every great palace had its library and picture gallery, while on the ground floor collections of sculpture both modern and antique were arranged on pedestals and brackets.

Directly above, the mezzanine floor was reserved for the private life of the family. Here the ceilings were quite low and spectacular life was subordi-

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FIG. 33. CHEST OF DRAWERS. TUSCAN, ABOUT 1670

nated to a certain amount of domestic comfort. The decorations of the rooms were simple, often beautiful and appropriate, but these were so overshadowed by the magnificence of the *piano nobile*, that we have little account of the original schemes, they being totally ig-

nored by the chroniclers and writers of that period.

In striking contrast to some of the notably severe façades of the larger seventeenth century palaces were the lavishly decorated interiors. Nearly all of the new forms that were introduced in the second half of the sixteenth century were retained, especially in the first half of the succeeding century, and were treated with the greatest freedom. Architraves, cornices, and pediments were often



FIG. 34. CHEST OF DRAWERS. CENTRAL ITALY, ABOUT 1670

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FIG. 35. BRONZE CANDLE-STICKS. ABOUT 1600
FROM THE COLLECTION OF PHILIP LEHMAN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

interrupted in the most exaggerated manner and the bold cartouche motif is prominent. Occasionally in work done about 1600 the most literal classicism was adhered to in some features. These were associated with others exuberant with naturalistic and grotesque forms.

Walls were treated elaborately in varied ways. When they were not covered with frescoes picturing heroic personages or muscular gods, large painted canvases were inserted in panels, many of which were earlier pictures cut down or enlarged to fill new spaces. Numerous chambers and cabinets were still hung with velvet, damask and tapestries, damask gaining in favour as

the century advanced. On these walls hung portraits, and toward the end of the century large mirrors elaborately framed. Nugent noticed that many of the living apartments of the Roman palaces decorated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were hung with red velvet or damask, with a broad gold galloon at every breadth of the stuff and a gold fringe finishing the top and the bottom, for, he says, "they have very little tapestry." He also informs us that their state apartments are all adorned with frescoes or pictures.

Ever richer and more sumptuous materials were required to satisfy the



FIG. 36. STONE TABLE WITH MOSAIC TOP. ROMAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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FIG. 37. WALNUT TABLE. ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF CHAS. A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

pretentious taste of the patricians. Skillfully combined with gilding and frescoes were masses of marbles, both antique and modern, of various colours and, when these could not be secured or afforded, dados, cornices, pilasters, and other architectural features of wood and stucco were marbled in the most deceptive manner.

The most sympathetic medium for the new decorations, however, was stucco, "malleable and obedient to the pressure of the hurrying hand, it lent itself admirably to the inventive caprice of the artist and to the leafy richness of the decorative style." Volutes, scrolls, leaves, cartouches, and figures both grotesque and naturalistic, were lavished around architraves of doors, or filled to overflow panels above them. Cornices and ceilings of stucco replaced the splendid carved-wood ones of the classic



FIG. 38. WALNUT TABLE. NORTH CENTRAL ITALY, EARLY XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

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Cinquecento. Both vaulted and flat ceilings, when they were not brilliantly frescoed, were often painted with the most deceptive architectural features, in the manner instituted by Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel. Enormous chimney-pieces were supported on caryatides or brackets of exaggerated scale, with stucco over-decorations composed of boldly modelled figures reclining



FIG. 39. CARVED WOOD TABLE. BOLOGNA, ABOUT 1650
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

on, or disporting amongst, Baroque architectural features and ornament.

Nor did the decorator confine his energies to contemporary structures; his superb grandiosity invaded the ancient interior as well, where his lavish



FIG. 40. WALNUT TABLE. LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

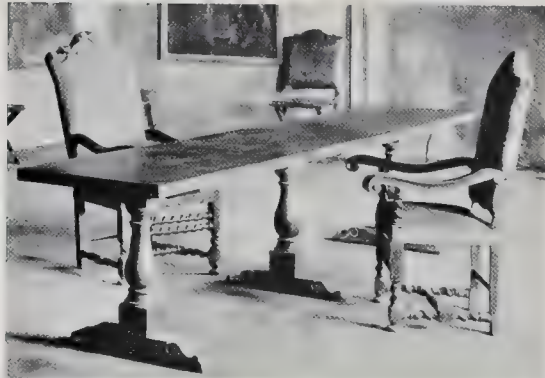


FIG. 41. WALNUT TABLE. FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE PINACOTECA COMUNALE CITTÀ DI CASTELLO

decorations contrast strangely with the austerity of the majestic exterior. Molmenti tells us that the entrance halls of the old Venetian palaces with their painted wooden benches, their gallery lanterns, and huge armorial bearings of the family, "produced a chilly feeling of melancholy in a generation steeped in luxury, who preferred to promenade in ample courtyards and colonnades of marble such as are to be seen in the Palazzi Pesaro and Rezzonico." Martinioni in his *Aggiunte to the Venetia of Sansovino*, published in 1663, describes several of these fine courts and colonnades, which have long



FIG. 42. MONASTIC TABLE. BOLOGNA, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 43. WALNUT CENTRE TABLE. EARLY
XVII CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF CLARENCE H. MACKAY, ESQ.,
ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND



FIG. 44. WALNUT TABLE. BOLOGNA, ABOUT
1650
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION,
FLORENCE

since been demolished. With patience we can gather, from the rather rude phrases of this same contemporary, some idea of the materials and motifs of this florid style. In his description of the interior of one of the most import-



FIG. 45. TRESTLE TABLE. CENTRAL ITALY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

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ant of the seventeenth century Venetian palaces no longer existing, which was built for Count Giacomo Cavazza, he notes friezes and jambs of doors done in black and white marble, ornamented with scrolls of Paragone marble from Bergamo, and chimney-pieces covered in excellent stucco work. Of the apartments on the ground floor he writes that instead of the usual arrange-



FIG. 46. CARVED WOOD CENTRE TABLE. VENETIAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ment of domestic offices, there are charming salons. As one enters, "both the eye and spirit are fascinated no less by the pure white of the vaulting of great height, and by its decoration of stucco festoons and figures and other beauties, than by the splendour of the fittings and the great variety of artistic objects on all sides. To the right and left in the niches are statues and between these on brackets stand heads and busts. A little farther on are oval panels of cyprus wood painted by the best masters of this city. A carved frieze runs all around, and below it are bas reliefs of great value, exquisite antiques on pedestals, great canvases by master hands." He speaks with admiration of a grotto enclosed by an iron railing of gilded lilies and of the re-

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finement displayed in the velvet-covered settees and chairs and the velvet hangings of the long suite of rooms; also of a gallery ending in a hall with six niches, six doors, and four windows all stuccoed in white with roundels of red French marble connected by festoons. Upon tables of Paragone and of ebony inlaid with ivory stand specimens of ancient and modern sculpture, well cast bronzes,



FIG. 47. WALNUT CENTRE TABLE. TUSCAN, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

and other rarities. The space of one of the doors is artistically filled with four great mirrors, each in six squares, with gilded metal frames. Next comes a loggia with columns and cornices of Verona marble, called *mandolato*; the ceiling is in stucco, and all around are scenes painted in gouache; above these come pictures of birds, flowers, fruit, and game with Florentine mosaics of lapis lazuli and other precious stones.

Still existing are the ornate interiors of the Palazzo Abrizzi at Sant' Apollinare, altered a few years after 1667, and giving further proof of the extravagant and florid taste of the Venetians at this period. Here the heavy stucco work, in the style of Alessandro Vittoria, reaches the climax of the exuberant

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and bizarre. Around the heavy classic architraves of the doors installed in the late sixteenth century Baroque modellers have lavished stucco foliage and capricious scrolls, while on the ceilings and above the doors amorini and bold figures in the round, sport in agitated poses. In another chamber, a stucco ceiling, representing a huge canopy with folds radiating from a centre supported by putti and with more putti sporting among its folds, is perhaps an example of the most exaggerated work of this period.

That these apartments were arranged for display instead of for domestic comfort is easily understood when we read the old chroniclers' descriptions. Ivanovich, a guest at the Venetian marriage of Leonardo Pesaro's daughter in 1676, writing of the Pesaro apartments says: "the decorations beggared description by their richness and variety; but above all was the audience chamber, covered to its full height with the most splendid embroidery with its twin chairs of state, its window curtains of cloth woven in gold and silver. The chandelier, with its branches of rock crystal, lit up the splendid apartment, while in the neighbouring chambers were mirrors and brackets also of rock crystal between



FIG. 48. CARVED WOOD TABLE WITH PAINTED TOP. TUSCAN, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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gorgeous hangings. Hundreds of great candelabra and candle sticks of silver heightened the beauty of the scene."

In the second half of the century, when the Baroque style began to show the influence of contemporary French design, we find the furnishings and decoration of the interior further exaggerated by large mirrors ornately framed. The Italians must be credited with the introduction of crystal chandeliers, sconces, and

the great mirrors framed in carved and gilded wood. Liberale Motta of Venice carried the making of mirrors to perfection in 1680 and produced sheets of a size before unknown. Yet as early as 1644 Evelyn speaks of the mirrors in the Borghese Villa at Rome of which he says, "the perspective is also considerable, composed by the position of looking glasses, which

render a strange multiplication of things resembling divers most richly furnished rooms." About the same time Lassels writes of the Duke's palace at Modena, then a Papal possession, that the rooms are "as neat and rich as any I saw in Italy; witness those cham-



FIG. 49. WALNUT TABLE. ABOUT 1650
FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAYNE WHITNEY, ESQ.,
NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 50. WALNUT TABLE. LIGURIA, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE
XVII CENTURY

COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 51. ARM CHAIR. TUSCAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY

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bers hung round with the pictures of those of his family and wainscoted with great looking glasses and rich gilded."

Evelyn describes many interiors of the Roman palaces as he saw them with their seventeenth century furnishings. The Palazzo Barberini, perhaps



FIG. 52. WALNUT SIDE CHAIRS COVERED WITH DECORATED LEATHER. ROME, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

the most important, he says, "seems from its size to be as princely an object as any modern building in Europe." The magnificent stairs lead into a stately hall, "the volto whereof was newly painted à fresco by the rare hand of Pietro Berretini il Cortone. To this is annexed a gallery com-



FIG. 53. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSFO CIVICO, MILAN

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pletely furnished with whatever art can call rare and singular and a library full of worthy collections, medails, marbles, and manuscripts."

The criticisms of old travellers, though often quaint and interesting, are of less importance than their sometimes intimate descriptions of interiors. Of the seventeenth century furnishings in the Palazzo Reale at Turin, Lady



FIG. 54. ARM CHAIRS. LIGURIA, MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE KARL FREUND COLLECTION, NEW YORK CITY

Morgan's criticism finds expression in her description. She writes: "It is rich, stately, comfortless and showy, overloaded with ornament and deficient in accommodation,"—the last comment a consensus of more modern criticism of old palaces. "The gallery of the palace so often described and so highly eulogized has all the splendour which frescoes and gilding can bestow. The numerous and exquisite portraits of Van Dyck are the most precious treasures of its collection. Rooms of various size, order,

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FIG. 55. WRITING CHAIR. TUSCAN, ABOUT 1640-60
FROM THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM, LONDON

and richness follow; cabinets and oratories, toilets and shrines, thrones and altars, boudoirs and audience chambers, are passed through, or by, in endless succession." In these she notes "walls of Japan and wainscots of ivory, frames of silver, doors of mother-of-pearl." Lassels writes of the same palace at a much earlier date, "the chambers are fair and hung with hangings of cloth of tissue, of a new and rich fabric,

with rich embroidered beds, chairs, stools, cloth of state, and canopies. The Duchesses' cabinet, the curious bathing place above, hung round with the true pictures in little of the prime ladies of Europe: the curious invention for the Duchess to convey herself up from her bed chamber to that bathing room, by a pulley and swing, with great ease and safety; the old long gallery, one hundred paces long, with the pictures in it of the Princes and Princesses of the House of Savoy, with the statues of the ancient emperors and philosophers in marble, with a rare library locked up in great cupboards—are the chief rooms and ornaments of this palace."

In these interiors, with masses of form and colour, it can readily be seen how the design of the furniture would become equally exaggerated. When all the greatest masters of the age were striving for exaggeration and



FIG. 56. SIDE CHAIR. LIGURIA, ABOUT
1640-60



FIG. 57. ARM CHAIR. LIGURIA, ABOUT
1640-60

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAYNE WHITNEY, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 58. WALNUT STOOLS. TUSCAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF CLARENCE H. MACKAY, ESQ., ROSLYN, LONG ISLAND

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FIG. 59. SIDE CHAIR. TUSCAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BAGATTI VALSECCHI COLLECTION, MILAN



FIG. 60. SIDE CHAIR. BOLOGNA, ABOUT 1600-20
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 61. CHILD'S CHAIR. TUSCAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY

originality it is but natural that the same undisciplined character should be found among the furniture designers with whom they collaborated. Like that of the architecture and other allied arts, the furniture design of the seventeenth century, until its modification by the French influence during the latter part, was based on the same general characteristics as that of the late sixteenth century. Heavy and violent, the designs are characterized by an over-abundance of exuberant carving, in some cases skilfully executed. The teeming fantasies of unrestrained artisans found spontaneous expression in wood carving. Tables, chairs, cabinets, beds, and frames are unrestful with volutes, large foliated scrolls, grotesques and human figures combined with armorial bearings and heraldic devices. Moulds were more vigorous, emphasizing panels

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FIG. 62. SIDE CHAIRS. TUSCAN, LATE XVI CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

of varied and elaborate form, while the return of the coarsely carved mould is a noticeable feature. The raised panel was preferred in more elaborate work and not only its top, but its sides as well, were often outlined with curved forms.

Though at the close of the sixteenth century the cassone had become of far less importance in the furnishing of the house and the seventeenth century was to see its gradual elimination, yet some are to be found, dating from the first half of the seventeenth century, of considerable decorative importance. These are often of a lighter toned wood and generally of simple rectangular form



FIG. 63. CHILD'S CHAIR. TUSCAN, EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY

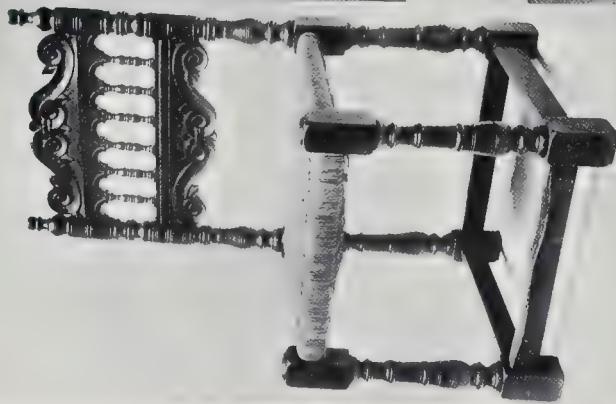


FIG. 64. SIDE CHAIR. LOMBARDY, EARLY
XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BAGATTI VALSUCCI COLLECTION, MILAN

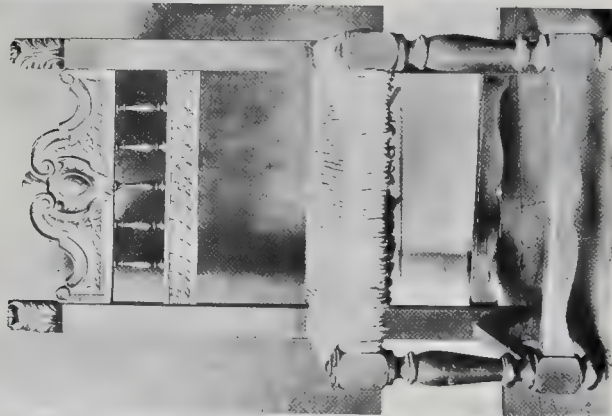


FIG. 65. SIDE CHAIR. TUSCAN, ABOUT
1600
THE PROPERTY OF CHAS. A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

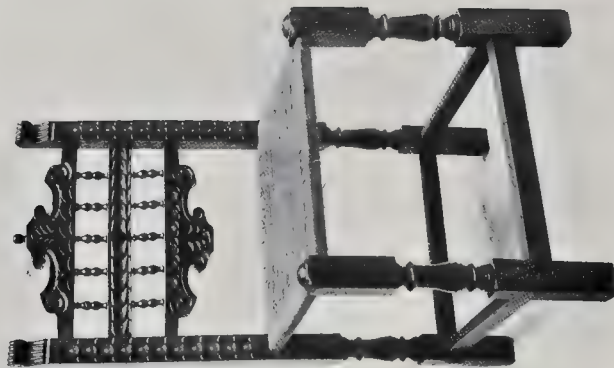


FIG. 66. SIDE CHAIR. LOMBARDY, EARLY
XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BAGATTI VALSUCCI COLLECTION, MILAN

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slightly modified by incurving moulded bases resting on lion feet, and with tops raised on concave moulds. The large top and front panel were sometimes inlaid with a lighter toned wood, bone, or a composition in patterns of arabesques, grotesques and other fanciful motifs resembling the designs of Vasari and Poccetti, often of unusual delicacy and refinement for the work of this period.

The credenza, another form of Renaissance furniture, maintained its prominence throughout the seventeenth century, growing, perhaps, less important toward its close. These were found in all the more comfortable houses where, in the dining-room, they were the chief object of decorative furnishing. Many simple types are found, indicating that they were as necessary in the household of the comfortable middle classes and the respectable provincial families as in the palaces of the nobility.

In general the form and arrangement of the seventeenth century credenza varies but little from that of the late sixteenth century, its distinction being obtained more through the character of the ornament. Many of the most representative designs exhibit the popular raised panel work like that exhibited in two credenze shown in Figures 1 and 2. The



FIG. 67. SIDE CHAIR. BOLOGNA, FIRST HALF
OF THE XVII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF CHAS. A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

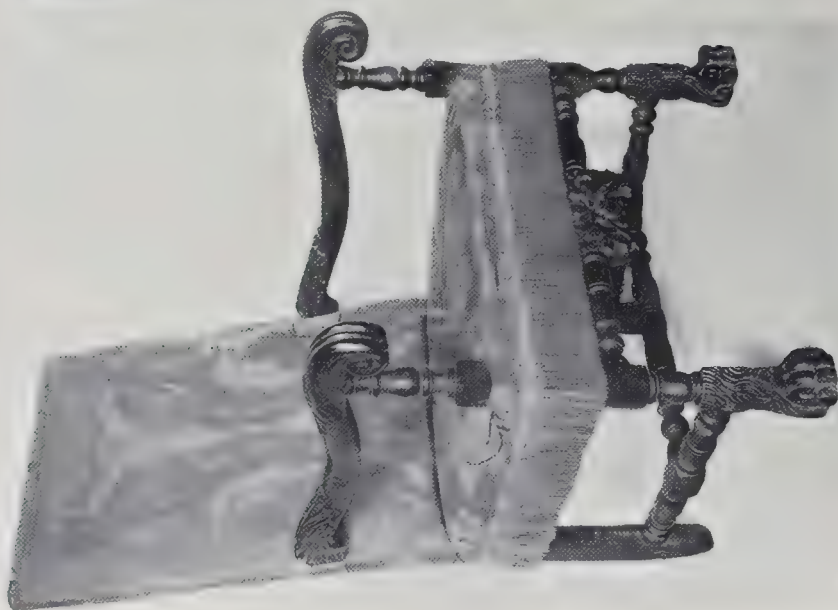


FIG. 68. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE
XVII CENTURY

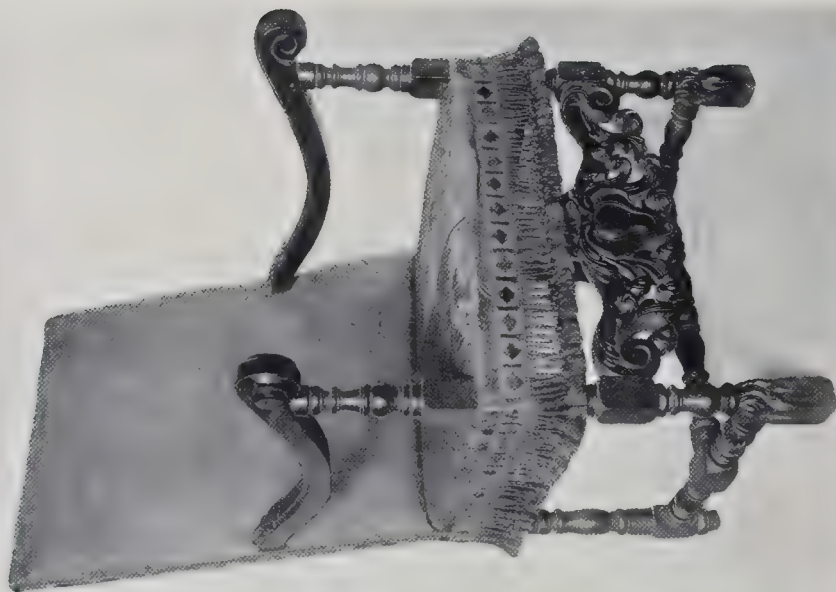


FIG. 69. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE
XVII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

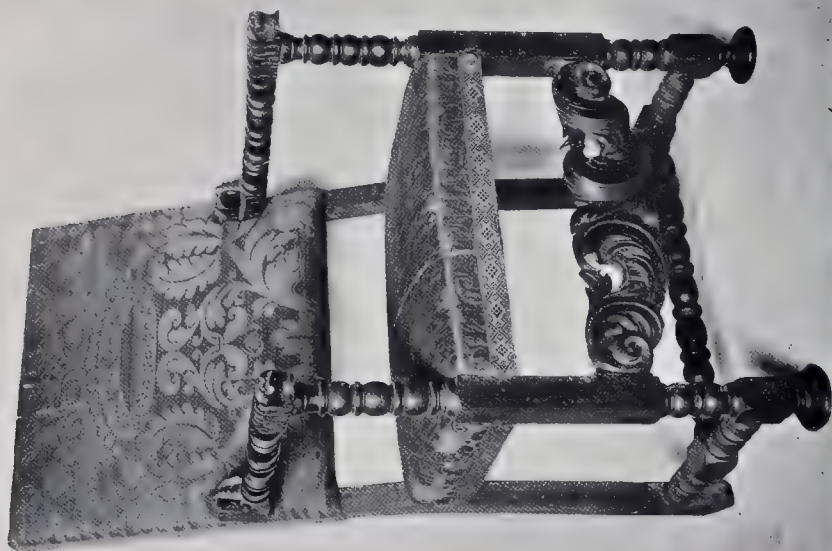


FIG. 70. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE
OF THE XVII CENTURY



FIG. 71. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE
OF THE XVII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

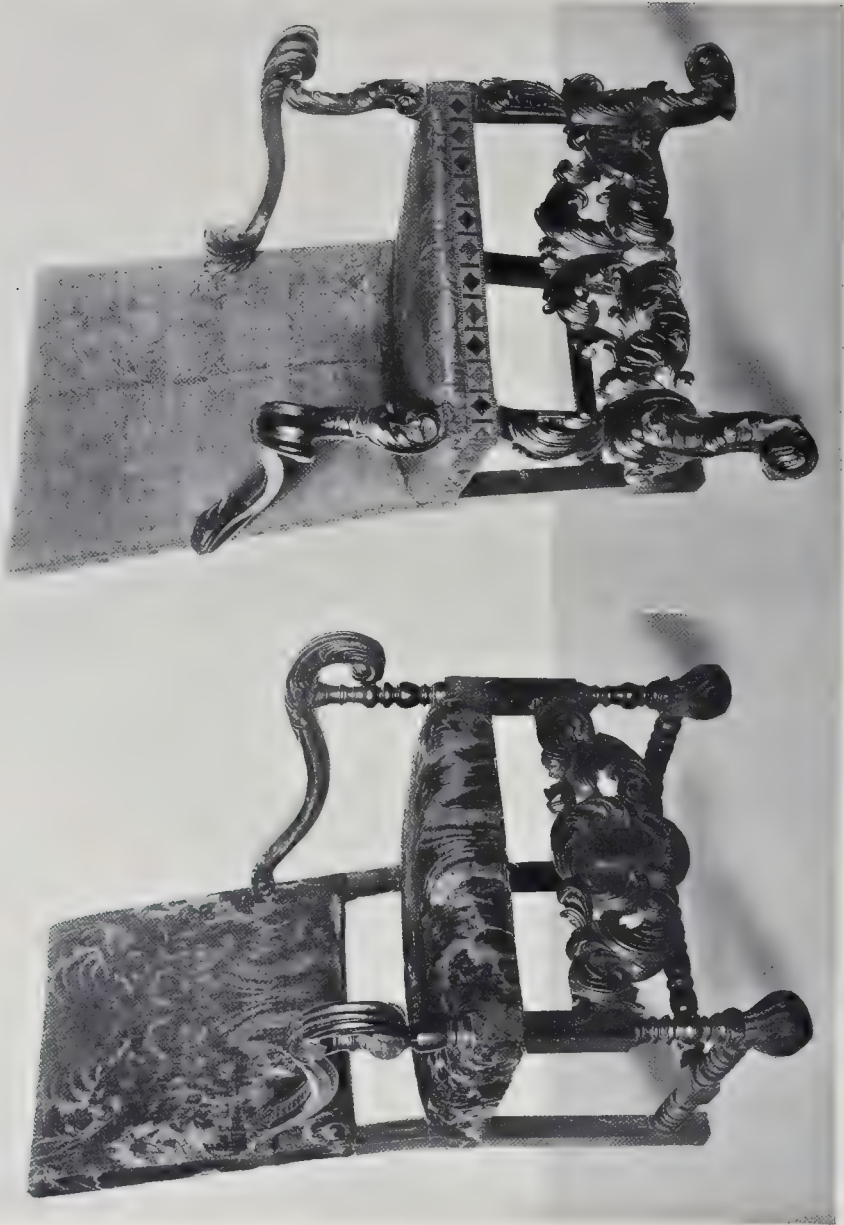


FIG. 72. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, ABOUT
1650-70

FIG. 73. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF
OF THE XVII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ITALIAN FURNITURE

former is of unusually long proportions and is undoubtedly from one of the several well furnished ecclesiastical institutions that were to be found in the vicinity of Bologna.

Bologna at this time and throughout the century was a Papal city of considerable importance, being greater, richer, and more populous than Florence. In addition to the numerous palaces the ecclesiastical institutions were "extremely large and very magnificent." Misson, perhaps the most reserved in his praise as well as the most critical of the foreign travellers, writes of the monasteries and convents of Bologna in the late seventeenth century: "It is certain there are few sovereign princes whose palaces are near so beautiful." A description of a monastery salon in the Apennines between Bologna and Florence is given by a privileged guest in the eighteenth century: "Its dimensions are about forty feet by twenty, and thirty high. It was hung with gilt Turkey leather, which appeared at first like a hair-coloured damask with gold flowers; the ceiling Gothic arches



FIG. 74. WALNUT BENCH. VENETIAN, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 75. CHAPEL CHAIR. ROMAN, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

in sections, like a church; the windows placed very high, with steps up to them; the shutters painted and gilt in arabesque; the chairs exceedingly easy, and covered with the same materials with the walls; the chimney very large, projecting into the room, and a prodigious fire of excellent dried Sapin neatly clove; a fine six-leaved screen, which was drawn round us; the saloon was lighted by wax candles in magnificent silver candle sticks."

Returning to the analysis of Figure 1, the arrangement of the double doors between narrow vertical panels

and the frieze formed of drawers separated by modillion brackets are in the Renaissance manner, while the raised panelled work of curved outline ornamenting the doors and drawers, the slightly canted corners, the disposition of the upper and lower drawers are more in accord with the prevailing seventeenth century style.

Of simpler design and earlier date is the other typical Bologna credenza

ITALIAN FURNITURE

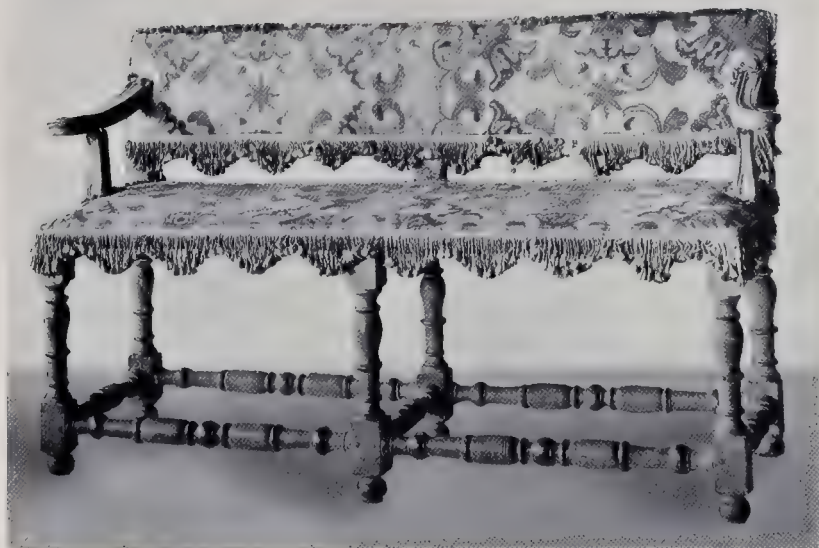


FIG. 76. PAINTED AND GILDED SETTEE. TUSCAN, ABOUT 1650-70
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

illustrated in Figure 2. Here the Renaissance arrangement has been retained intact—two doors separated and flanked by narrow panels with drawers placed directly over them forming a frieze. Much fine furniture of this type was produced at Bologna in the early seventeenth century; like Bolognese furniture of the preceding epoch it is distinguished by rather heavy but well proportioned parts. Heavily moulded bases and thick plain tops are noticeable features, but more important are the bronze knobs and handles often formed of human heads, in the manner illustrated, and occasionally of exceptionally fine modelling. The raised panels are of the simplest form while the rack at the back of the top composed of three receding tiers, on which the plate was displayed, is ornamented with a repetition of the same small panels. These racks are often found on the credenze of this period, while few of those that occasionally crowned the earlier ones are intact to-day.

Figure 4 is a more elaborate example of Bolognese cabinet work showing

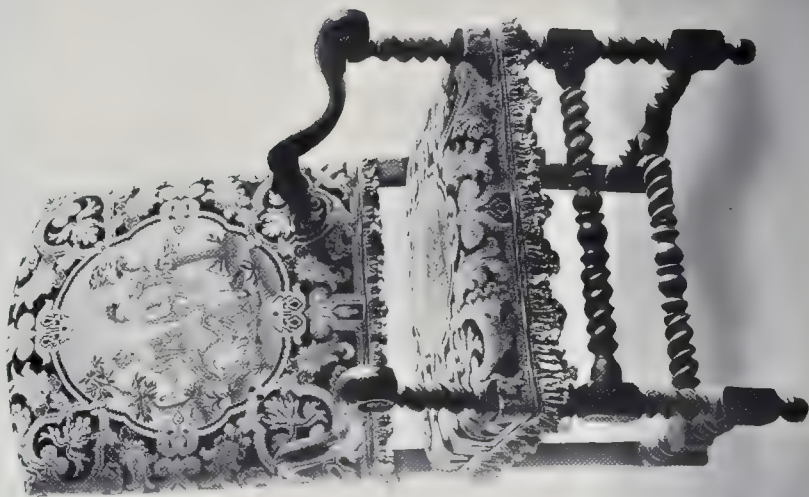


FIG. 77. ARM CHAIR WITH NEEDLEWORK COVERING. TUSCAN,
ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE TOLLENTINO GALLERIES OF ROME AND NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 78. WING CHAIR WITH NEEDLEWORK COVERING. NORTHERN
ITALY, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

the use of nail heads arranged in patterns, as in many contemporary Spanish cabinets. The double doors and panels that flank and separate them, giving the appearance of a series of doors, are studded with patterns of nails and have as handles bronze heads similar to those in the preceding illustration. The drawers above have raised panels ornamented in the same style. Above the body is a more ornamental rack with small raised panels each studded with nail heads, the whole being crowned with a carved cresting displaying a cartouche motif in the centre. The mould and base rest on simple block feet in the usual manner, while the top studded with nail heads is characteristic not only of many of the cabinets from this section, but also of the table tops.

Highly representative of the pompous and ornamental taste of the time are the two armoires from the Museum of Parma presented in Figures 5 and 6. They are a veritable encyclopaedia of the ornamental forms of the highly developed Baroque style as it prevailed in the vicinity of Parma and Modena. They reveal at the same time the rivalry of these small, yet most pretentious, courts with the larger and richer centres, and their struggle for an environment of fitting aggrandizement. Figure 5 is the more violent of the two designs illustrated. Flanking the double doors,

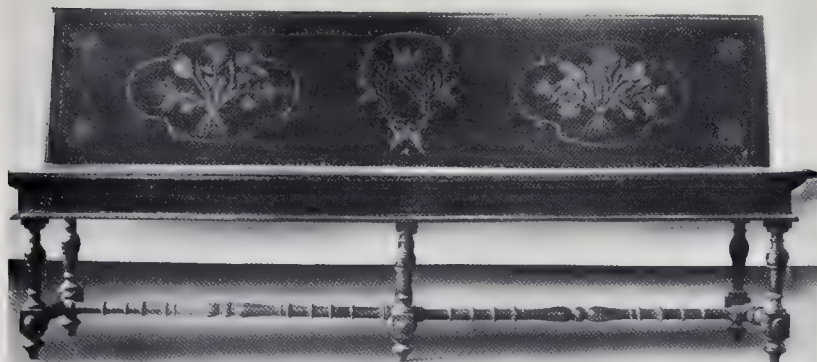


FIG. 79. WALNUT BENCH WITH INLAY DECORATIONS. SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF CHAS. A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 80. ARM CHAIR WITH NEEDLE-WORK COVERING. TUSCAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY



FIG. 81. ARM CHAIR COVERED WITH TAPESTRY. TUSCAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE TOLENTINO GALLERIES OF ROME AND NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 82. CARVED WOOD ARM CHAIR. VENETIAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM, LONDON

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elaborately panelled and carved with prevailing motifs, are two vigorous, tapering consoles, also richly carved. These rest on heavily moulded bases and support a cornice equally bold that breaks around them in a style established in the sixteenth century. The convulsive mass of carving composed of the shell, riotous curves and vases of flowers forming the cresting, is illustrative of the most exaggerated phase of the style prevailing in the second half of the century.

Figure 6 is of similar form, twisted columns twined with vine motifs and crowned with carved capitals taking the place of the tapering consoles of the

preceding design. Twisted columns are especially prominent in more elaborate work, their vogue being fully established by Bernini's employment of them in his design for the high altar of St. Peter's (1627-32). In furniture they appear as table supports, as bed posts and flanking doors of cabinets in the manner of the figure illustrated. In this case they rest on pedestals that have been incorporated into a base containing a drawer. This is panelled with oblongs having corners with re-entering angles filled with applied rosettes. In the same way are panelled the double doors, while the frieze of the interrupted cornice is carved with foliated scrolls and the



FIG. 83. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. VENETIAN, SECOND
HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF SIG. ANTONIO SALVADORI, VENICE

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FIG. 84. FOLDING CHAIR. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF OF THE
XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

cornice mould above has a dentilated member and numerous carved modillions. The carved cresting is composed of forms similar to that of Figure 5,—scrolls, vases and the shell, in addition to a cartouche motif.

Perhaps the sumptuous taste of the period found its most adequate expression in the elaborate furniture produced by the renowned Florentine inlay industry known as *pietra dura* or *pietra*

commessa, a product of which is illustrated in Figure 8. Though highly developed in the late sixteenth century, under the direction of its founder Ferdinand I. (1587-1609), this art reached the climax of its perfection and popularity in the first half of the seventeenth century during the rule of Ferdinand II., when many of the tables and cabinets admired so extravagantly by foreign travellers were supplied for the Italian palaces.

As no princely house of the fifteenth century was complete without a *cassone* enriched with *pastiglia* and painted decorations by Dello Delli or Andrea di Cosimo, so in the early seventeenth century the pretentious Italian houses, as well as those of the rest of Europe, must include among their sumptuous furnishings a cabinet, or at least a table, by the *Pietra Dura* Manufactory. These cabinets like those of the previous epoch were

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generally of ebony or a dark-toned wood, and in design were most complicated, imitating elaborate architectural designs. Those of this period are, however, even more ornate, and with their windows, pediments, columns and other features, resemble miniature palaces and churches. They were still inlaid with ivory and semiprecious stones such as lapis lazuli and onyx, also with ivory, crystals, and bronze. Beds, chests, and tables were designed in this manner as well. Ercole Udine, the Duke of Mantua's ambassador to Venice, mentions in 1603 seeing six chests of ebony with three niches each, containing figures of Jove, Venus, and other gods; also a bed of ebony with its sides reaching to the base, which by its description seems similar



FIG. 85. CARVED WOOD READING STAND. ROMAN,
FIRST HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

to the one pictured in the early sixteenth century wall decorations of Agostini Chigi's Villa at Rome. While this work was perfected by the Florentine craftsmen it was not confined wholly to Florence. At the close of the sixteenth century the intarsia work of the Venetian, Federico Currelli, was highly praised and in great demand. Armoires, cabinets, and credenze

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FIG. 86. SEAT OF WROUGHT IRON AND BRONZE. ROMAN,
EARLY XVII CENTURY
FROM THE PERUZZI DE' MEDICI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

were embellished by him with inlays of ivory, pearl, and various metals in addition to applied ornamental metal trimmings and gilded bronze figures. Semi-precious stones, such as chalcedony, agate, cornelian, and jasper were also freely used. (See Figure 10.)

The vogue for antique and contemporary sculpture in decorative

schemes introduced many new designs for pedestals and brackets, both in carved wood and stone. Numerous pedestals of carved wood survive, displaying the most ornamental results of the wood carver's art. Of these, two excellent illustrations of the sgabello form are shown in Figures 13 and 14, both dating from the early part of the seventeenth century. Figure 13 is entirely gilded while Figure 14, of a rich toned walnut, has parts of its ornament brought out with gold.

Figures 11 and 12 are two wall pedestals of about the same date, the former being of a sort of a papier maché composition with its surface entirely gilded. A finely modelled figure ending in dolphin tails supports the frieze ornamented with a cartouche motif. This example, with the accompanying one, is based on the form of the downward tapering shaft that was introduced in the second half of the sixteenth century. Figure 12 has the imbricated ornamentation that was much used in the late Renaissance; the grotesque head, however, as well as the arrangement of the shell and scroll decoration, gives the whole a later character.

Because old beds have become scarcer than any other article of fur-

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FIG. 87. WALNUT STOOL. ROME, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

niture through the institution of new fashions, only a few survive from this period, and these are generally old state beds that owe their existence chiefly to the value of their materials. Many of these were marvels of the upholsterer's art and when shorn of their original and unhygienic hangings, cornices, and covers of rich stuffs, as some have been, little if any decorative significance remains. Yet a few museum specimens still survive intact in some of the old Lombard palaces and villas. This vogue for excessive hangings and trimmings

began just after the middle of the century when the French influence was in its ascendancy and lasted throughout the first half of the eighteenth century in a style modified by the contemporary types used in France and England.

Mrs. Piozzi in an account of her Italian travels in the late eighteenth century writes of a visit to a Milanese palace: "I saw an old Marchioness lying in bed in a spacious apartment just like ours in the old palace, with a tister touching the top almost." She speaks of the bed being magnificent in the old style of grandeur of crimson damask with the family arms at the back.

Beds of carved walnut with and without the canopy were the kind in general use, in fact they



FIG. 88. WALNUT STOOL. BOLOGNA, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 89. CARVED WOOD CHAIR. VENETIAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 90. CARVED WOOD CHAIR. VENETIAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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FIG. 91. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. LATE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

were the prevailing style in the palaces as well as in the less pretentious houses throughout the seventeenth century. An elaborate example dating from the first years of the century, without a canopy, is illustrated in Figure 15. It is profusely carved and entirely gilded. A later walnut model of similar construction, without being raised on the predella, is shown in Figure 16. The finials of the posts are more exaggerated and the carved cresting of the headboard is emboldened with the cartouche and foliated scrolls in a manner affected after 1650.

A later seventeenth century bed of a highly decorative

character is preserved in the Palazzo Pesaro at Venice. It has a headboard panelled in small rectangular compartments with painted decoration on a gold ground. This is crowned with a cresting composed of foliated scrolls and



FIG. 92. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. SECOND HALF OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

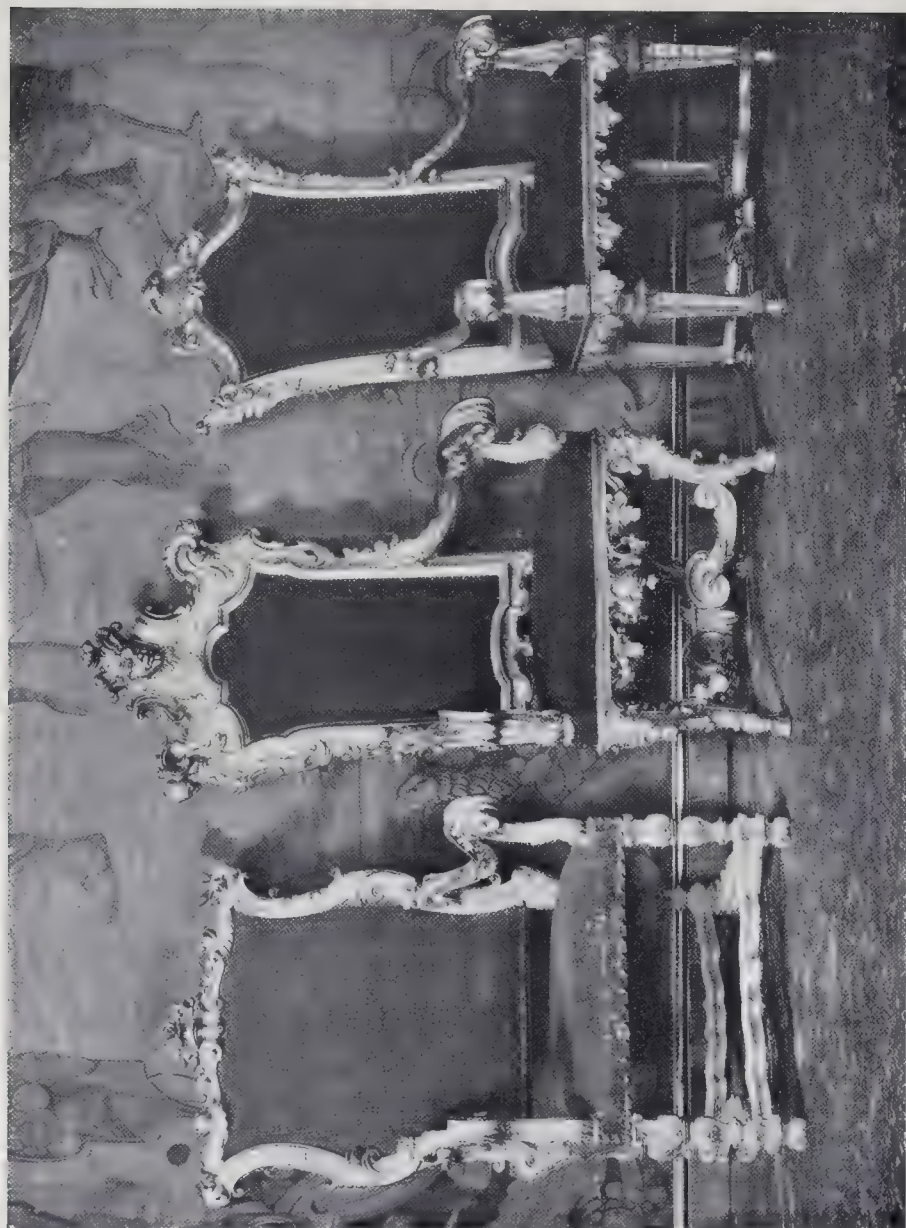


FIG. 93. CARVED AND GILDED ARMCHAIRS, PARMA, ABOUT 1700
FROM THE MUSEO D'ANTICHITÀ, PARMA

ITALIAN FURNITURE

putti. The footboard and the high posts are omitted, instead there are elaborately carved rails similar in design to the headboard cresting, at the sides and foot. Behind these, hanging to a predella, is a damask valance. The predella is covered with the same material.

Florentine artisans not only lavished their ingenious designs and rich materials on cabinets and tables, but created beds in the same style. They were evidently of a most amazing appearance for we have numerous accounts of them from both the Italian writers and the foreign travelers of that day. John Evelyn writes of one he saw in Prince Ludovisi's Villa at Rome: "Inlay with all sorts of precious stones and antique heads, onyxes, achates, and cornelians, esteemed to be worth eighty or ninety thousand crownes." In the same villa were "divers tables and cabinets of Florence work." In the house of a Venetian noble he saw another "bedstead all inlaid with achates, crystals, cornelians, lazuli, etc., esteemed worth sixteen thousand crownes."

However concerned we may be to-day with the more human and less sumptuous expressions of the furniture of this degraded age, a correct historical summary could not be formulated without a recognition of the part these magnificent atrocities played in the expression of taste. Into the category falls the silver furniture of the magnificent princes and ecclesiastics. Though invasion and poverty has spared to posterity little of this—even those historical specimens



FIG. 94. CARVED AND GILDED SIDE CHAIR.
PARMA, ABOUT 1700
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

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FIG. 95. CARVED AND GILDED SIDE CHAIR.
ROME, END OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

they were numerous we infer from Evelyn's frank and quaint remark—"For ye most part ye bedsteads in Italy are of forged iron gilded, since it is impossible to keep the wooden ones from chimices."

Continuing with the development of the credenza, two excellent examples are shown in Figures 17 and 18 dating respectively about the middle of the

made for Versailles having lost their identity in the mints of France in later periods of financial collapse—we learn that the passion of the Roman cardinals for luxury was carried to such an excess that beds and other furnishings composed of solid silver and set with semi-precious stones were carried in their magnificent trains when on a journey to a diocese. No wonder Pope Innocent besought them "to give up a life which was utterly incompatible with the spirit of true religion, an insult to honest poverty and a fruitful cause of sneers and sarcasm."

Few of the elaborate iron beds of this period are to be found, but that



FIG. 96. CARVED AND GILDED STOOL.
ROME, END OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 97. CARVED AND GILDED STOOLS. VENETIAN, LATE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 98. CARVED AND GILDED BENCH. ROMAN, LATE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 99. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. LUCCA, ABOUT 1700
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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century and a decade or two later. Only by the ornamentation is Figure 17 distinctive of this period, its form and arrangement, like many dating as late as the eighteenth century, being identical with those of the period of the High Renaissance. The expression of the moulds, however, the curved tops and bottoms of the panels of the doors, the raised panel work of the narrow vertical panels dividing and flanking the doors, and those of the drawers, as well as the design of the modillions in the frieze, sum up an adequate expression from one of the smaller provinces between the years 1640-1660.

Figure 18 is a superior piece of Florentine cabinet work of the second half of the seventeenth century, probably after the style of Louis XIV. had reached a certain state of development. Especially fine are its moulds outlining the curved panels of the doors, indicating a recognition of the Louis XIV. style. Of a lighter toned walnut, almost velvety in texture, its general form, and its sparing but effective use of carving, evince the survival of the classic Florentine taste, in spite of a discouraging environment.

Figure 20, coming from the vicinity of Bologna, is also gracefully modified with curved forms, as were many of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century credenze. Like Figure 18, it is without drawers and unlike that example has smooth surfaces which enhance the decorative value of the inlay design composed of grotesques and scrolls ornamenting the door panels and narrow pilas-



FIG. 100. GREEN AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
VENETIAN, ABOUT 1700
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 101. CARVED AND GILDED STOOL.
ROME, END OF THE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ters flanking them. The curved sides are embellished with an inlaid cartouche motif. As in most cabinet work of this period the moulds are numerous and much interrupted. As the century advanced and as the cabinet-maker aimed at originality and startling effects, forms of panels became more restless, yet successful decorative results were often obtained even in this exaggerated phase of the style. This is well illustrated in the writing desk seen in Figure 22 where the lower body is constructed in the manner of a credenza, while the upper part with its fall front, revealing drawers, is in the style of the numerous bureaux that were much in vogue in the late seventeenth century. Similar panelling is displayed in the credenza with rounded corners shown in Figure 21. This piece has a decided provincial character and its crudeness, as in most provincial furniture, is softened by a beautiful quality of richly toned walnut.

Though the chest of drawers made its appearance in the late sixteenth century, it was not until the seventeenth century that it became an indispensable article of house-



FIG. 102. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. NORTHERN
ITALY, ABOUT 1700
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

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hold furniture. Many of the earlier ones had a top drawer with a fall front, revealing a writing compartment fitted with smaller drawers and other divisions. This style of chest was now preferred to the high vertical writing cabinets with the more clumsy fall fronts that prevailed in the late Renaissance.

Figure 23 is an example embellished with inlay and carving in the seventeenth century taste. Again appear the panelled forms, seen in numerous foregoing illustrations. They are embellished with inlaid woods of various tones illustrating popular fables. Ornamented in like manner are the smaller drawers in the top compartment revealed by the fall front, while the larger drawers of the lower body are framed with a coarsely carved mould. Between the intarsia panels are carved motifs often met with in work of this period.

One of a pair of chests of drawers coming from a Bolognese palace is shown in Figure 25. Though the design of the inlay illustrated is by no means common, inlay patterns of geometrical and mechanical design are often met with in the seventeenth century, beginning with the fourth and fifth decades. After this art had



FIG. 103. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. VENETIAN, LATE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 104. CARVED AND GILDED SIDE CHAIR. VENETIAN,
ABOUT 1700
FROM THE HARDINI COLLECTION, FIRENCE

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been practically abandoned in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in favour of carving in high relief, it was revived again about this time in a less naturalistic and more mechanical style.

More inlay of abstract pattern is employed to embellish the drawers of the chest illustrated in Figure 27. The form



FIG. 105. WHITE AND GOLD STOOL. VENETIAN, LATE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

of the front has been varied from that of the rectangular, providing two tiers of small drawers at either end. The small and large drawers panelled alike with a sort of fluted mould, seen often in contemporary Flemish and Dutch work, are ornamented with a white bone inlay, the ground of the whole being ebonized wood.

It was in the last quarter of the seventeenth century in Venice, Turin, and adjacent parts of Northern Italy that furniture first began to appear designed after the Louis XIV. style in France, the Italians beginning to copy whole or parts of designs from the numerous French publications of that time. The many engravings of the architect and engraver Jean Marot and his son Daniel; some two thousand designs of Jean le Pautre, together with the prolific work of Jean Berain, his brother Claude and their contemporaries, did much to diffuse the style of Louis XIV. throughout Italy, completely revolutionizing the Italian Baroque.

A chest of drawers of the period, clearly marked by this influence, is illustrated in Figure 28. Although thoroughly Italian in character, its decoration is directly inspired by that of the contemporary style in France. About this time the form of many chests began to be varied by concave

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and convex fronts and sides and by rounded corners; the one illustrated shows a slightly concave front, straight sides, and rounded corners. The panel decorations of gilded relief set in a framework of richly toned walnut produce a fine effect. Similar decorations fill the end panels and the surface of the rounded corners, while enriching the base and cornice mould are carved members also brought out in gold. Another early example of an adaptation of the Louis XIV. style from the north of Italy is seen in Figure 29. Even more pronounced is the recognition of the French style in the system of stretchers, the form of the supports, and the carved panel decorations of the drawers. The form of the legs, the way in which they are panelled and decorated with a pendant of husks, will be seen often as table, cabinet, and chair supports in Italian as well as in French work in the decade just previous to 1700.

The ebonized Florentine cabinet ornamented with tin inlay illustrated in Figure 30 is directly derived from a French design. The style of leg and diagonal curvilinear stretcher employed in its structure was prominent in the work of French designers by whom it was perfected. The design of the inlay is even more convincing. In spite of the fact that Boulle got his ideas and motifs for metal and tortoise-shell inlay directly from the Florentine workers, the pattern of Italian work illustrated is without doubt derived from a Boulle design—another proof of how the Italians copied or adapted designs that had been perfected by the French from Italian motifs.

Similar, but of somewhat later date (about 1700), is the writing table presented in Figure 31. The same square tapering legs and diagonal stretchers are employed in its construction. The complicated curves of its form and its generally lighter appearance indicate in this piece its later character. The inlay, though of similar pattern, is of a light toned wood, the body being of a dark and richly toned walnut.

Among the most important tables surviving from this period are those magnificent stone ones of which we hear so much from the old writers. The finest, which date from the first half of the century in form and decoration, often follow Renaissance models. One of these, coming originally from the

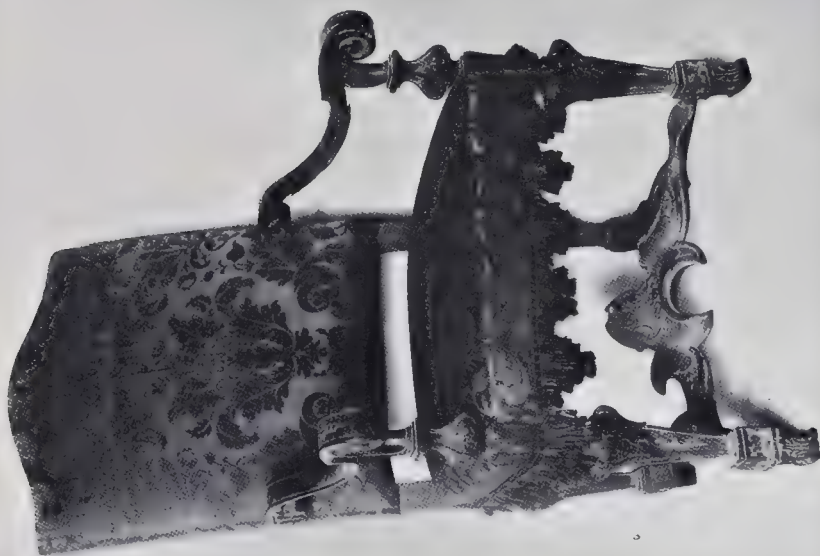


FIG. 106. ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF OF THE
XVII CENTURY



FIG. 107. ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF OF THE
XVII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 108. WALNUT BENCH. LATE XVII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

Borghese Villa, is shown in Figure 36. The form of the three supports shows little change from those of the late Renaissance, the decoration, however, is in the style of about 1600. The surface of the top, which unfortunately cannot be seen in the reproduction, is inlaid with large geometrical patterns composed of antique marbles of different colours. Tops as well as other parts of these tables were often inlaid with the most elaborate patterns by the Florentine artisans. John Evelyn writes in his diary, "when I was at Florence, the celebrated masters were, for *pietra-commessa* a kind of mosaic or inlaying of various colour'd marble, and other more precious stones." In the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence he saw "diverse tables of *pietra-commessa*," which had, as he goes on to describe, "a marble ground inlay'd with several sorts of marbles and stones of various colours, representing flowers, trees, beasts, birds, and landscips." In the Borghese palace Nugent notes a table of Oriental jasper, valued at eleven thousand crowns, and describes another large one of lapis lazuli in the Altieri palace. These tables were coveted by all the princes of Europe. Under Richelieu, and subsequently Mazarin, the French palaces were filled with these Italian products. It was Richelieu who ordered the famous one

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FIG. 109. WALNUT BENCH. LATE XVII CENTURY
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

now in the Louvre, valued by La Fontaine at the exaggerated price of nine hundred thousand livres.

Tables of marble mosaic and those with gilded decorations are by no means representative of the prevailing types; they were found only in the palaces of the princes at Rome, Florence, Venice and a few other important cities, while those in the households of the upper classes, both in the provinces and in the principal cities, were more frequently of walnut, constructed with turned supporting members braced by stretchers of various styles. Tables of this kind were introduced in the late sixteenth century, but it was not until this time that they came into general use and were of such great variety. Of these, Figures 37, 38, 39, and 40 give an idea of the different sizes and shapes as well as of the diversity of stretchers and methods of turning.

Another popular style of table structure is shown in Figures 41, 42, and 45. Figure 42 is the most common of these with single turned end supports resting on bases, connected with a longitudinal stretcher. Numerous tables of this sort come from the monasteries and other domestic institutions

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of ecclesiastical societies, where they were used for dining-tables. Those from the vicinity of Bologna are especially fine. The Bolognese one illustrated is about seven feet long, but many more are found varying in length from eight to twelve feet; in all cases the width is slight. Figure 45, a survival of the trestle table, has ends of more complicated structure, without the longitudinal stretcher. Figure 41 is another variation with three supports and no stretcher.

In direct contrast to these severer types is the pair of elaborately carved wood tables attributed to Brustolone, of which one is illustrated in Figure 46. Brustolone (1662-1732), one of several generations of master wood carvers, is one of the few known furniture designers of this period. He is especially famous for the picture and mirror frames which he carved with amazing skill. Of furniture there are the few chairs in the Museo Civico at Venice, and a few surviving tables that are accredited to him. Though much of his work was done in the first quarter of the eighteenth century it bears the stamp of the most exaggerated Seicento manner. The table illustrated was probably executed before 1700.

Figure 47, perhaps a few years earlier, is also in a style common to this period. The legs are based on the same curves and are placed at the same angle as those of the preceding; the system of stretchers is, however, an innovation. The upward diagonal braces of curved outline are undoubtedly derived from those of wrought iron used to brace many contemporary Spanish tables. Two Italian variations of the last named type are seen in Figures 48 and 50. The former is one of the most elaborate with richly carved supports and painted top, while the latter is one of the simpler ones of provincial origin.

The high-back Renaissance chairs of rectangular structure persisted in modified form throughout the seventeenth century. They were still used in formal rooms ranged with cabinets and tables against the wall. Settees designed in the same style were found arranged in the same manner; in most cases these were merely an elongated chair design and were rarely found before the seventeenth century.

In the second and third decades of the century chairs in this style had

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undergone a change of aspect that render them almost unrecognizable. One of the earliest variations is shown in Figure 51. As in table design, so in chair construction, turned and twisted members were profusely employed.

In the chair illustra-

ted, twisted supports and stretchers, vigorous sweeping arms, and equally prominent finials give it a decidedly changed appearance.

The next step in the evolution of the important arm chair was a noticeable change in proportions; one dating from the earlier part of the second half of the century is shown in Figure 53. As in most of the later chairs of the seventeenth century, with twisted supports and stretchers, backs are lower and there is a generous use of carved foliage in decoration. Few of these chairs retain their original coverings and trimming which were, as a rule, rich and elaborate. The pair of chairs upholstered in needle-work shown in Figure 54 is a contemporary variation. The placing of the elaborately carved stretcher, formed of foliated scrolls and a coat-of-arms, gives it a somewhat different aspect.

Accompanying arm chairs were numerous side chairs, stools, and benches of various design and proportion as illustrated in Figures 55, 57, and 58. Figure 55, noticeable for its very high seat, is a type that was used for a writing chair at the combination chest of drawers and desk in which the writing compartment was placed unusually high, requiring a seat of relative height. Figure 57 is one of the numerous arm chairs of still smaller proportion, with a style of monotonous turning found often in chair construction



FIG. 110. PAINTED BENCH. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1700
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

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in and about the vicinity of Liguria in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Some of the most pleasing and successfully designed chairs are found among the many smaller side chairs, such as are shown on pages 49 and 50. Of these the two illustrated in Figure 62 are the earliest and finest, dating about the beginning of the century. These smaller chairs display much variety in design; Figure 60 is the most uncommon, while Figures 64, 65, and 66 are excellent examples, their backs having ornamental horizontal splats with little turned spindles placed between them, and rush seats instead of upholstered ones.

It was between the years 1630-1670 that the Baroque style reached its most exaggerated phase in furniture design, yet some of the arm chairs of this epoch are among the finest examples of the seventeenth century. Of these, Figures 69, 72, and 73 are the most ornamental still within the realm of sanity, Figure 72 with fine proportions, bold and sweeping arm lines, being of the highest order. In all three chairs the debased acanthus and cartouche motif are prominent and, as in the most exaggerated types, Figure 73 has front legs and arm supports as well as its front stretcher formed of these foliated scrolls. The use of foliated scrolls as constructional members and decorations of chairs reached its most uncontrolled expression about 1660-70, in examples similar to those illustrated in Figures 82, 83, and 90.

One of a set of six narrow hall benches and a prayer chair from a palace chapel exhibiting the fully developed Baroque style at its best, are seen in Figures 74 and 75. The benches are of walnut with unusually long and narrow seats, about six feet in length, resting on aprons carved in a broad and vigorous manner. The chair is upholstered in red velvet and has the carving of the back splat, as well as parts of its turnings, enriched with gilding.

Two chairs showing the influence of the north are illustrated in Figures 77 and 78, the former dating about the middle of the century has a type of turning seen in the best French models during the reign of Louis XIII. The vogue, however, for turning and twisting structural

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members of chairs prevailed in Italy in the early part of the century, when a few Italian chairs of this type were imported into France and England. It was from these that the French, Flemish, and English craftsmen undoubtedly got their first idea for this style of chair that became so popular in those countries about the middle of the seventeenth century. While the backs of the Italian models offer a variety of form, the straight and slightly curved top is more general. Covers of needle-work were not as popular in Italy as in France and England, velvets and damask being greatly preferred. However, some fine examples of Italian needlework are found, as this figure proves.

Throughout the last two decades of the century, when the contemporary French style had begun to modify all Italian Baroque art, chair design was not slow to follow. It was not until the end of the century, however, that the Italian adaptation of the Louis XIV. style had been fully established in chair design and these pieces often present a confusion of French and Italian motifs. At this time began the craze for gilded furniture which was to last throughout the greater part of the following century.

The chairs from the Museum of Parma, seen in Figure 93, adequately illustrate the most debased and ornate phase of the gilded style dating about 1700. There are other examples of this style in the same museum, among which is a notable harpsichord, while at Naples in the Museo della Certosa di S. Martino there are more chairs in the Neapolitan style, which is even more debased. At Rome and Naples the style of Louis XIV. was more slowly assimilated, more of the late Italian Baroque nature was retained, especially at Naples, where the most debased designs were further exaggerated by gilding.

Accompanying these monstrous arm chairs were numerous benches, stools, and side chairs, benches and stools being more numerous, as the large ornate arm chairs were generally used for chairs of state by the prince or sovereign in formal rooms or audience chambers, often under canopies of velvet and damask. Around the other sides of the room were arrayed numerous benches and stools and an occasional console table.



FIG. III. MARQUETRY COMMODOE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. TURIN, ABOUT 1720
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

CHAPTER II

THE ROCOCO STYLES

THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A jest from Scaramouche or Harlequin, an old book bound in leather, the noise of a gilded coach rumbling along the street, the beautifully written score of some grave oratorio, the air of a song delicate as a bird's, a sham sun-dial painted on the wall—dust, luxury, nothing to do, Volta and his frog, Silvia with her smile—there you have Italy in the eighteenth century.

MONNIER.



IRILE, brilliant old Italy was now a crumbling mass. Left as it had been by the last descendants of the house of Charles V., a prey to the ambitious European powers; shaken to its very foundations by Louis XIV., it had degenerated into an extraordinary aggregate of petty kingdoms and dukedoms, each with its picturesque population of scholars and artists, cavaliers and ballet dancers, men of science, adventurers, and effeminate ecclesiastics; augmented by gentlemen of Europe on the "Grand Tour" and antiquaries eager to carry off her treasures of art.

By this time, too, the greater number of the princely Renaissance houses had become extinct, with the exception, perhaps, of those of the Venetian aristocracy. Though the House of Savoy reached the zenith of its power and its princes exchanged their ducal coronet for a royal diadem, Venice and Genoa had been deprived of most of their territory, Milan and Mantua had been allotted to Austria, and Parma, after the last Farnese, had been handed over to a Bourbon prince. Florence was under the rule of the Lorrainers and the only remaining Italian institutions of any importance were the Venetian Republic and the Papacy.

French influence which had rapidly been gaining during the later years

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of the Seicento had, by the close of the century, completely supplanted the Spanish domination, dissipating that remnant of Spanish gravity that still lingered among the Italian upper classes. In spite of the fact that Italy was the scene of the most important European wars throughout the first half of the eighteenth century and that France possessed no more Italian territory than in



FIG. 112. COMMODE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. TURIN, OR GENOA, FIRST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

1559, French gaiety and frivolity had entirely transformed the art and manners of the Italians. Their Baroque art had by the middle of the century yielded completely to the lighter style of the French rocaille. Polite society was all French; French fashions in dress, furniture, and decorations were copied, French novels read, and we hear how "ladies neglect the Tuscan language to gabble French." Life was, no doubt, as artificial in the eighteenth century as it was stilted in the seventeenth, yet there was a far greater charm about its rococo and Arcadian existence, unreal as the theatre with which it was bound up.

And practically the whole of Italy was transformed during this period.

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Lady Mary Montague remarks in a letter dated 1741 that "the manners of Italy are so much changed since we were here last, the alteration is scarcely creditable. They say it had been by the last wars. The French, being masters, introduced all their customs, which were eagerly embraced by the ladies, and I believe will never be laid aside." Piedmont had long been French, and Milan by her close



FIG. 113. COMMODE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS, PIEDMONTE, OR LOMBARDY, FIRST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

proximity soon came under the same influence. Gian Gastone de'Medici had transformed the court of Tuscany from the Spanish to the French mode, while Parma and Naples had Bourbon rulers. Horace Mann writing in 1749 says that the new Duke of Parma was not in favour with his subjects. "He is so horribly French that they cannot please him, and he is so horribly poor that they are quite disappointed and disgusted." He further relates that the ambition of the Duke of Modena to eclipse this Frenchified neighbour will be his material ruin.

As the hauteur and restraint of the Seicento relaxed into an abandon of enjoyment, amusement seemed to be the chief aim of a society in which scholar-

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FIG. II4. COMMODE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. NORTH ITALY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ship is said to have been pursued only as an aid to self-forgetfulness. Yet in this little outworn world of periwigs, theatres, and melodies there were still those among the nobility who patronized the arts and amused themselves with "a little science," for, as Nugent notes about the middle of the eighteenth century, "the nobility and gentry are very profuse in their buildings, furniture, and gardens, and in making collections



FIG. II5. COMMODE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. NORTH ITALY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

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of pictures, statues, hangings, and other ornaments; they are also fond of splendid equipages, and great trains of servants, choosing to lay out their money rather in this manner than on luxurious tables and strong liquors.



FIG. 116. MARQUETRY COMMODES. NORTH CENTRAL ITALY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

They have a vast relish for outward appearance, praises, pompous titles, and great names."

This inordinate vanity was, perhaps, even more strikingly reflected in the furnishings of their apartments; elaborate beds, numerous and ornate mirrors and successions of colourful salons made brilliant with crystal chandelier and painted furniture, indicating as Fradeletto claims, in "*La Vita Italiana nel Settecento*," the habits of a decadent society. But with all this acknowledged artificiality, frivolity, and lack of force, recent historians have been compelled to admit "there was something in the Rococo charm of the eighteenth century which was peculiarly suited to the Italian temperament, with its genius for

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what may be called the decorative side of life; for not even in France is that charm more gracefully expressed than in the Italian lesser arts of the period, and nowhere could the pseudo Arcadian style, which had in itself the qualities of a



FIG. 117. CARVED WALNUT COMMODE. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

miniature, have been more fittingly represented than in the miniature Italian courts."

As a whole Italian social life of the eighteenth century was a queer mixture of gaiety and dullness unless we go into the spendthrift society of the dissolute Venetians or the Frenchified Lombards. Everywhere, however, there were the literati, and more especially the "Academy of Arcadia", famed throughout Italy, which includes among its disciples not only literary geniuses, philosophers, and artists, but the nobility, bankers,

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priests, and lawyers as well. They would meet in trim gardens laid out with walks of close trimmed box, and alleys of cyprus against which pseudo-classic sculpture found a background; or else in lofty Seicento



FIG. 118. CARVED WALNUT COMMODORE. LOMBARDY, OR LIGURIA, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

rooms hung with faded tapestries and portraits or drawing-rooms with contemporary Rococo stucco, gilt framed mirrors and furniture of gold and colour. These throngs were composed of "senators in full bottomed wigs, poor literary priests in rusty little cloaks, smart young men with their hair tied in queues and their pockets crammed full of sonnets, and beautiful ladies with rouged cheeks and long-sleeved brocade dresses," who would read and recite verses, talk of the new books from Paris, the new opera from Naples, play at cards and sing. Reams of worthless poetry were produced,

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FIG. 119. COMMODE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. VENETIAN, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

for "the indolent, ostentatious nobles, who presided over these innumerable academies, required mad paradoxes and vapid hyperboles in their birthday odes and dedicatory sonnets as much as they required fluttering, smirking goddesses for their gardens, and curly



FIG. 120. COMMODE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. VENETIAN, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

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masonry and waving stucco work for their chapels." In retrospection this is all very picturesque, but in reality the intellectual standard was appallingly low; Italy's supremacy in science and music was fast passing to other countries, while her authors borrowed shamelessly from the French. Even in the smaller towns, where decaying architectural monuments rose

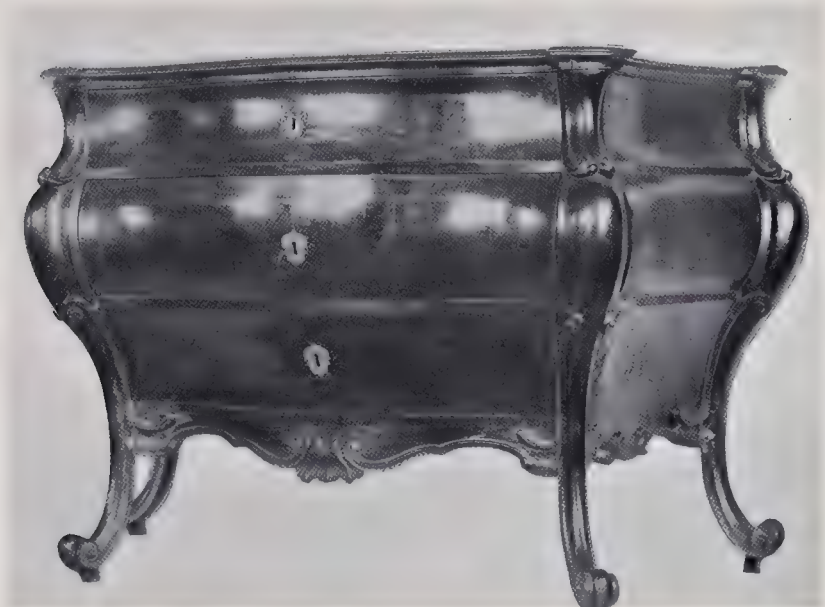


FIG. 121. WALNUT COMMUNE. LIGURIA, OR LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

from grass grown streets over which rumbled an occasional ornate gilded coach; where a strange but fascinating assemblage of battlemented towers and Renaissance palaces were enlivened by some less permanent rococo amenities, a social element, composed of petty counts and marquises, augmented by an upper class whose culture, manners and sometimes fortune equalled their own, likewise wiled away its dull existence, superficially patronizing art, science, and literature when not aping, to the extent their limited purses would allow, the more dissolute manners of the gayer centres of fashion.

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As it is to Florence we look for the masterpieces of the Early Renaissance, to the Courts of Milan, Mantua, Ferrara, and Urbino for the elegance of the High Renaissance, to Rome for the later grandeur that merged into the Baroque style, so it is to Venice we look for the supreme in Italian



FIG. 122. CARVED WALNUT COMMODE. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

art of the eighteenth century. As she was the centre of the only school of painting worthy of that land of masterpieces, so too, was she the source of the most exquisite furniture and decoration of this period. "Crumbling gaily away," she was in the eighteenth century an enchanted city of carnivals, masques, amusement and pretense,—the haven of the world's pleasure-seekers; attracting the idle, the rich and the fashionable of Europe. Voltaire, in that episode in *Candide*, made her the rendezvous where the hero dining in the company of six strangers discovers every one of them to be a king.

The life of the Venetians was one of indolence, vanity, and revelry. After nights of gay dissipation they would wake about midday to begin equally

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FIG. 123. CARVED WALNUT COMMUNE. EMILIA, FIRST
HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. HOWARD MAXWELL, GLEN COVE, LONG ISLAND

frivolous occupations. Molmenti tells us how, after decking out, powdering and perfuming themselves, and after studying every pose in the glass, the way to sit down, the way to walk, the way to bow, they sallied forth looking like the little porcelain figures with which their cabinets were crowded. In the piazza, alive with gossip, flutter of fans and rustle of silks, they promenaded. In the great halls and salons of the palaces they gave balls, fêtes and musicales when they were not engrossed in the theatre, whence they would go on to the cassini, staying until about dawn. A contemporary complains that perhaps in no other city is two o'clock in the morning considered the most fashionable hour to begin a conversazione. Yet manners far more dissolute accompanied the material ruin brought by luxury. Perhaps "some few patrician families preserved their patrimony by a wise administration but many more purchased their ap-



FIG. 124. CARVED WALNUT COMMUNE. EMILIA,
1770-80
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

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pearance of aristocracy at the price of financial disaster. Whole fortunes were eaten up in clothes, extravagances, gaming, and pleasures. Vanity would not allow them to acquire fresh riches by trade and industry or by cutting down superfluous expenses, so many a noble family light-heartedly squandered the savings of its ancestors." Even the churches, with their gilded rococo scrolls, glorious Tiepolo frescoes, and extravagant and sensuous music were



FIG. 125. MARQUETRY COMMODORE. LIGURIA, OR LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

but a rendezvous for the fashionable beauty with her lapdog and the dandy with whom she ogled and flirted. It was a joyous, frivolous life. As the old Venetian proverb ran, "In the morning a little mass, in the afternoon a little party, in the evening a little flirtation," and their conception of life was as diminutive as their themes for verse, painting and the exquisite trifles with which they filled their apartments.

After the carnivals rounds of revelry began in the villas. It has been said that about La Mira and Golo, skirting the Brenta and the highway to

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Treviso, were a hundred and thirty summer palaces, with great ball-rooms, theatres, endless salons and guest rooms, smooth lawns, rococo gardens, and little casini richly furnished which Casanovo described in his exaggerated terms as "temples of voluptuous lasciviousness." According to Monnier, the day was but a series of delights tasted in common, "little vanities enjoyed together, voluptuous nights and rapture shared in safety, far from the jealous



FIG. 126. MARQUETRY COMMODOE. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

eye of the Censor of the Revels. The toilet, coffee, cards, excursions, music, balls, and comedies engross their lives, they live and die in holiday humour."

Amid all this luxury and corruption, however, family life among the middle classes remained intact. Far from the world of frivolity, the Piazza, the "French Puppets"; far from the scandal, musical flourishes and ballets, nestling near the parish churches or in the narrow side canals, lived the bourgeoisie. They were conservative and traditional, detesting "poisonous French sauces," poetry books and flowing ribbons; nor did their frugality allow them time for the constant sipping of coffee or chocolate. Their cloth-

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ing, like their furniture, was austere. They wore wool instead of silk, and when a new piece of furniture was occasionally needed—perhaps some rush bottom chairs, a walnut chest of drawers and a mirror in a walnut frame—it was made along the lines of the new mode, but severely simple. Still Lamberti claims that in their houses, especially in those of artisans,



FIG. 127. MARQUETRY COMMODE. LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

seamen, and gondoliers, there was to be found a certain amount of comfort, while Menego in the "Putta Onorata" says, "we keep our houses with decency and decorum. On the table you might see pewter plate and in the kitchen platters of copper and pewter ranged along the walls; in the bedrooms the high bedsteads, with their clean mattresses, had white sheets trimmed with lace. Everywhere was the love of order and of cleanliness, and an air of peace."

If Genoa could boast of greater wealth than Venice in the first half of

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the seventeenth century, she could not in this period be considered as a rival in any sense. By the end of the seventeenth century, after the wars against the Dukes of Savoy and the attack of the French, there was a noticeable decline in the wealth of Genoa, yet in spite of a comparatively poor government there were still many private families with considerable wealth, enabling them to alter or add to the interiors of the palaces that had been reared by Allessi and his followers, the elaborate rococo decorations and furnishings still remaining in a few of the Genoese palaces. And these few Genoese families did not confine their luxurious manner of building and living to the comparatively few town houses. Ac-

cording to Nugent, "the neighbourhood of Genoa is full of villages and delightful country seats in the top of the hills; but the magnificent suburb of San Pietro d' Arena is full of such noble houses, built with such excellent taste that they are fit for the greatest princes to inhabit."

Perhaps Spanish customs and manners prevailed more generally at Genoa in the seventeenth century than at any other city of Italy, with the exception of Naples, but after freeing herself from her financial dependence upon Spain a rapid transformation took place in the art and life of the Genoese. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Addison tells us, "In general they [the Genoese], love the French and hate the Piedmontese; a very few principal families seem attached to the English, but the greater number dislike them. The people pretend a partiality to that nation; perhaps they have their views; as but few of them are disinterested. If the Genoese (at least the nobles) had to choose a master, they would undoubtedly prefer France." Yet in all their lavish display, combined with their extremely frugal, cautious, and keenly com-



FIG. 128. MARQUETRY COMMODOE.
LOMBARDY, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1760
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES A. BURDEN,
NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 129. CARVED WALNUT ARMOIRE. LIGURIA, OR LYONS, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII
CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF J. LUCAS, ESQ., FLORENCE, ITALY

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mercial spirit, there still emerged a remnant of Spanish hauteur and harshness that lends an appearance of dryness and stiffness to this period of French Rococo imitation. In their art as in their social life there was not that same unconscious gaiety that we find in Venice or that pretty Arcadian playfulness and



FIG. 130. CARVED AND GILDED PRIE-DIEU. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 131. CARVED WALNUT PRIE DIEU. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

quaintness that pervades the expression of some of the smaller courts. Though a more sumptuous quality of materials and craftsmanship is apparent, the lesser arts of the Genoese are devoid of much of the poetry of the age.

Socially as well as politically Turin remained little more than a mediaeval despotism, its social life remaining, throughout the eighteenth century until its disintegration under the Napoleonic rule, the most autocratic in Europe. Gibbon claims that Carlo Emanuele III., who came to the throne in 1731, was, after Frederick the Great, second among the sovereigns of Europe. The court which had been organized on much the same basis as that of Versailles and considered one of the most polite in Europe, was thronged with a retinue



FIG. 132. PAINTED ARMOIRE. VENETIAN, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

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of over three hundred courtiers, for whom all the highest places of church and state were reserved; in consideration of this fact all the noblesse were bound by absolute obedience to its monarch, even to the details of their private life. Lord Chesterfield laid great stress on the importance of his



FIG. 133. PAINTED COMMUNE. TUSCANY, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

son's stay in Turin. In one of his letters dated 1749 he writes, "You will now, in the course of a few months, have been rubbed at those of the considerable courts of Europe, so that I hope you will arrive at Turin tolerably smooth and fit for the Polish. There you may get the best, there being no court I know of that forms more well-bred and agreeable people." Montesquieu, a visitor in 1728, pronounced it "le plus beau village du monde." Nugent's comments are equally favourable. He writes that it

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FIG. 134. PAINTED
CLOCK. VENETIAN,
FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII
CENTURY

COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH &
CO., NEW YORK CITY

was one of the finest cities in Italy in the mid-eighteenth century, "for the magnificence of its buildings, the beauty of its streets and squares, the number and social temper of its inhabitants, and for all the conveniences of life." Turin is practically an eighteenth century city. The town suffered greatly from the siege of 1706, and Nugent claims that it was rebuilt to great advantage by the king of Sardinia. Besides the university, there were numerous academies for riding, dancing, and martial exercises, which brought a vast concourse of strangers to the city.

After a century of deterioration under Spanish repression the Duchy of Milan showed renewed vigour. Milan at this time had become one of the largest and finest cities in Europe, having a population of about three hundred thousand. Its streets were broad and well kept, its houses large and well built. Abounding in artisans and merchants, its gentry and nobility were also numerous, living in well-furnished palaces and houses while maintaining an agreeable social life. In the fertile environs of the city were numerous country houses with fine gardens many of which still survive, retaining much of the most characteristic decoration and furnishings of the period.

There appears to be little change in the decorative arts and the outward appearance of Roman social life until the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century. In spite of the fact that as a temporal state the Papacy had become quite insignificant, its feudal claims and the inviolability of its states being totally disregarded by the European powers, there persisted from the last half of the Sixteenth a demand for pompous titles and a craze for aggressive sumptuousness, which found realization in vast palaces, magnificent with heavy and violent decorations and



FIG. 135. LACQUER COMMODE WITH MARBLE TOP. GENOA, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

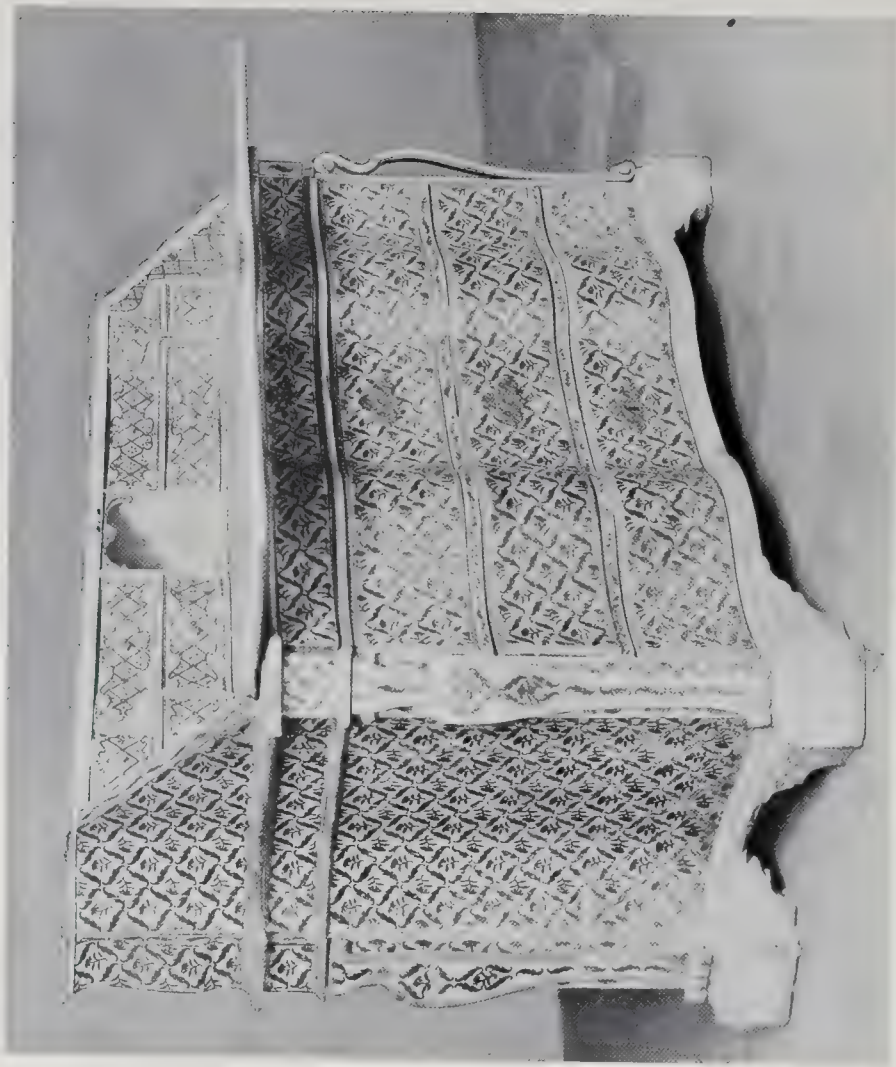


FIG. 136. PAINTED DESK. VENICE, EARLY XVIII CENTURY.
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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garrisoned with that gorgeous, yet sometimes motley, retinue of attendants that the Roman nobles deemed necessary as an environment because of the exaggerated estimate they held of their own greatness. Haughtiness and arrogance knew no bounds. Yet it is not to be wondered at that an aristocracy descended from Popes and Princes and allied to so many of the foreign nobility, should live in a style of luxury far exceed-



FIG. 137. PAINTED DESK. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ing the rulers of Germany and of other less cultivated courts of Europe.

Roman pomposity could not, however, withstand the influence of Versailles, which by the middle of the eighteenth century had somewhat tempered Roman Baroque art as well as the tone of Roman society with a little more of the grace, lightness, and gaiety of the French Rococo. Cardinal Bernis, a favourite of Madame de Pompadour, holding court in the Palazzo Salviati and "vieing with his royal master at Versailles in reckless prodigality" seems to have led the fashion of that illustrious throng composed of Cardinal Albani, the houses of Odescalchi, Cesarini, Sforza, Rospigliosi, and others of the older families. It was the early days of the old Café Veneziano, that rendezvous of the really great, the pretentious, and the fashionable, the age when society was entertained by parties in the

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lovely gardens of the numerous villas that surrounded Rome and by private theatricals presented in the theatres of the palaces belonging to the powerful families of the nobility. In these private theatres the tragedies of Maffei and Corneille, the dramas of Metastasio and the music of Porpora and Paisello were first presented, in a style that added greatly to the extravagances that were daily impoverishing the decadent nobility.



FIG. 138. LACQUER COMMUNE. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

In Florence, where the noble traditions of the Renaissance were strongest, the Rococo style was not embraced with the same abandon as it was at Venice and other more fashionable centres, yet the Lorrainers, who swamped the court about this time, found it most agreeable to their showy and less cultivated taste. After 1735, when Tuscany had become an appanage of the much hated house of Austria, the last of the Medici dukes, Giovanni Gaston, that "buffoon in a company of buffoons," was succeeded by Prince de Croan and his wife of low birth and crude manners, who administered the affairs of the dukedom for the Austrian Emperor, Francis. Assuming regal airs, they lived in the royal palace where they maintained a third-rate court, but we gather from the prolific

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correspondence of Horace Mann, who was residing in Florence at the time, that the new rulers were unable to maintain a due ceremony even on grand occasions. "They seem to forget the example of the Medici, the ceremony of whose court put it in their power to make a figure in things of more importance." This lack of taste in matters pertaining to art was naturally irritating to the Florentines. In another letter to Horace



FIG. 139. CARVED AND PAINTED COMMODO. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

Walpole (1750) he writes: "Florence is vastly altered since you were here and it alters for the worse every day. Poor people grow poorer and consequently more discontented; and not being able to vent their anger where it might be due, they squabble with each other. There is not the least society, except among the Lorrainers, who are chatty enough, but rather ignorant and insignificant."

French modes and manners had been introduced into the Medician court as early as the reign of Cosimo III. (1670-1723), by his Duchess, Margaret Louise of Orleans, a cousin of Louis XIV. and a favourite at his court. Though she failed to make that impress on Florence that had gained such popularity in the north, the costumes of the aristocracy and the new furnish-

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ings of their apartments could not be wholly unaffected by the style that was rapidly becoming popular at the court of Louis XIV. However, in the succeeding rule of Gian Gastone, with his inordinate love of entertain-



FIG. 140. PAINTED COMMODO. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ment and the society of gay young people, and by the aid of the Princess Violante who acted the part of the Grand Duchess with such popular success, the court became brighter with French fashions and social freedom.

Then, too, the Medician traditions of the Late Renaissance were maintained by the Electress Anna Maria Ludovica, daughter of Cosimo III., up to the year of her death in 1743. Until the last she held herself aloof from the newcomers, living in retirement, yet it was a retirement of the traditional Medician splendour, all that art could supply, the aged daughter of Cosimo imposed upon the already incredible aggregate that formed the environment of the Medici. She continued to add pictures to the Uffizi collection, nearly

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all of the Flemish masters being contributed by her, while her collection of furniture, tapestries, plate and china, together with her personal effects, were estimated in the eighteenth century at nearly two million pounds.

After the passing of the last Medici, and under the rule of the foreigners, the Florentines began to fall to the frivolities of the age. Their inherited classic traditions did not, however, lend themselves to the essential qualities of the new styles, and only among the ultra fashionable ladies did the French Rococo taste find an adequate expression. In another of Horace Mann's letters dated 1742 he relates how



FIG. 141. PAINTED COMMODO. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES OF ROME



FIG. 142. PAINTED COMMODO. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

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FIG. 143. PAINTED COMMDES. VENICE, ABOUT 1750-60
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

a Florentine princess had just refurnished her private apartments with much Saxon china, Walpolian Indian cabinets (lacquered cabinets) and how she crowded her tables with all the exquisite trifles of that day. "She sleeps in the first room which is large; in the next where she used to sleep is only to repose. There is a new cradle and all the lazy machines you can imagine."



FIG. 144. PAINTED COMMDE. VENICE, ABOUT 1760-75
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

In general there is little change in the average plan of the palace and the more important houses. There was, however, a tendency toward smaller apartments, combining more privacy and comfort. Many of the earlier palaces were altered in this regard, their decorations and furnishings being designed in the Rococo style. The new apartments were invariably made brighter and more agreeable for social intercourse, yet privacy and other refinements considered essential to the comfort of an English house

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were totally disregarded. It seems strange that the Italians, who were affected by the Renaissance at least a century before the other peoples of Europe, should not make in their house planning and the refinements and comforts of domestic and social life in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the same relative advance, but were, instead, inferior to England and France in these matters. Nugent complains that though the palaces of modern Rome were



FIG. 145. PAINTED COMMODE WITH MARBLE TOP. VENICE, ABOUT 1760-75
THE PROPERTY OF THE MRS. SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

superior to any in the world, though they had magnificent galleries and libraries and long series of rooms one within another, yet "they have not at the end of the apartment where the bed chamber stands, such a disposition of rooms for back stairs, dressing rooms, closets, servants' rooms and other conveniences that are requisite for rendering an apartment commodious."

While the Seicento found its most adequate expression in the large sumptuous chamber, in the Settecento smaller apartments of more delicate

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and feminine charm were preferred as a background for the panniered ladies in flowered brocades and taffetas, propped up on their high red heels. Large ballrooms and salons were, however, still a necessity and though pompous and magnificent, were somewhat transformed with mirrors, crystal chan-



FIG. 146. PAINTED COMMODORE. VENETIA, OR NORTH EMILIA, ABOUT 1760-75
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

deliers, numerous candelabra and gilded and painted furniture. Pictures, tapestries, and stuffs were lighter and gayer. Instead of the large patterned stuffs of violent colour harmony, more delicate designs such as festoons of flowers and scrolls in lighter hues were preferred. Cornices, architraves of windows and doors, as well as panels of walls and doors, all display a lighter scale, while rocaille scrolls, naturalistic motifs of many kinds, amorini and festoons were used as ornamentation, instead of the heavy volutes and

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grotesques of the former epoch. The great chimney pieces were replaced by smaller ones, generally of marble, with smaller openings. They were usually after the style of Louis XV. but as a rule of heavier scale, conforming to the larger apartments. Over these were large and ornate mirrors often extending to the cornice.



FIG. 147. PAINTED COMMODORE. NAPLES, OR SICILY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

Throughout all its different phases frescoes and painted decorations had been the glory of the Italian house, nor was this period to be wanting in this respect. Perhaps in the eighteenth century it was the ceilings that received the attention of the greater masters. Framed with a mass of stucco ornament, often heightened with gold and colour, were large panels of frescoes or painted canvases with blue skies in which amorini in their colourful nudity played with lighter and more graceful goddesses, replacing



FIG. 148. PAINTED COMMODO. VENETIA, OR EMILIA, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. PUTTILR



FIG. 149. PAINTED COMMODE. VENETIA, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF CARL FREUND, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 150. PAINTED COMMODO. VENETIA,
ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE
XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE ART MUSEUM OF THE COOPER INSTITUTE,
NEW YORK CITY

the more muscular and ponderous deities of the Seicento. Tiepolo, the master of this style achieves, perhaps, the triumph of his genius in those tumultuously clear and limpid ceiling decorations in the Palazzo Labia and Palazzo Rezzonico at Venice, that recall the splendours of the sixteenth century in the more delicate and softer sentiments of this decadent age.

Stucco was still the favourite medium in which to exploit the new style. Though some few apartments were panelled in painted wood, it was by no means as general as in France, wood always playing a much smaller part in the interior scheme of the Italian house than in that of the more northern countries. Dados, cornices, and pilasters, architraves of doors and windows, when not of marble, were generally of stucco and this sub-

stance was often painted in imitation of various marbles. Floors were rarely of wood, marble tiles or composition stone being used almost exclusively. Sometimes stucco decoration achieved striking results. In the Pal. Rovere, at Albissola Superiore, there is a salon the coved ceiling and walls of which are embellished with the most riotous, yet delightfully exotic rococo forms combined with foliage, wheat, and putti in a highly decorative manner. The same type of decoration follows the lines of the doors and windows.

The Chinese taste in decoration, which is especially noticeable at Venice, was most successfully exploited in this medium as well. In addition to the painted chinoiserie inserted in rocaille panels there were walls with stucco embellishments in the same style. In a villa near Venice there was still in existence a short time ago a series of rooms having walls deco-

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rated with stucco relief depicting little Chinese temples, pagodas, landscapes, and Chinamen, combined with rocaille scrolls in a most enchanting manner, surpassing in delicate imagery and in execution much beautiful French design in this style.



FIG. 151. PAINTED TRAY. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

Throughout the eighteenth century walls beneath Baroque cornices continued to retain their tapestry, damask, and velvet hangings and their

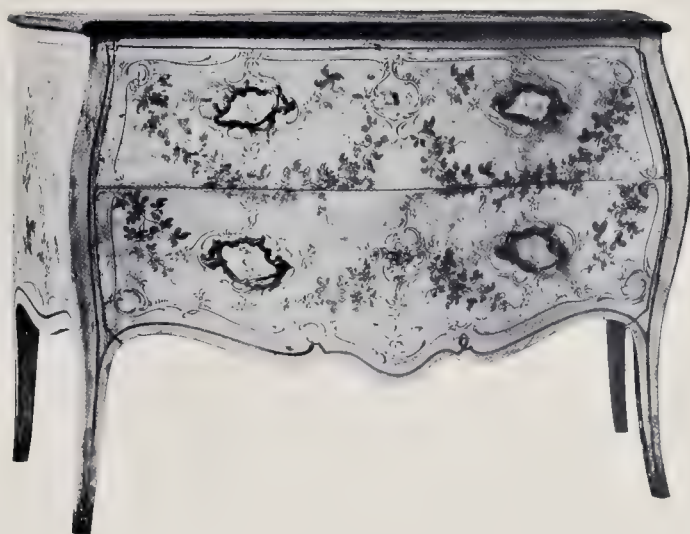


FIG. 152. PAINTED COMMUNE. VENETIA, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1750-60
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

painted wall decorations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The practice of hanging walls with crimson damask and velvet continued well

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into the eighteenth century for in the palace at Caserta, which was not begun until just before the middle of the eighteenth century, several large rooms were "hung in the Italian taste with crimson damask, velvet, etc., and amply illuminated." At Turin even the bedchamber, including the canopied bed in the apartments of the Queen, was hung with crimson velvet. Some Roman apartments of this period or possibly that of the late seventeenth century are described in the following letter from an English woman, written in the eighteenth century: "Our apartment consists of a good antechamber, a drawing room about 33 feet long by 30 wide and 15 high, two very handsome bedchambers and a narrow slip of a room which I intend to use as a *salle à manger*. The rooms, except the antechamber, are hung with crimson damask, the chairs, beds, and sofas of the same. They are furnished with fine marble tables and looking glasses." At Venice the same lady was lodged in the Palazzo Contarini, then converted into a hotel for strangers. Her apartment consisted of an antechamber one hun-



FIG. 153. PAINTED COMMODE. VENETIA, ABOUT 1750
FROM THE ART MUSEUM OF THE COOPER INSTITUTE, NEW YORK CITY

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dred and twenty feet long and as wide and lofty in proportion, a sitting-room, a cube of forty feet, and a large bedchamber and dressing-rooms, all of which, except the salon, were hung with crimson damask.

Salvagni gives a description of the Abbé Benedetti's apartments in Cardinal Carandini's palace at Rome, as he remembers them in his youth. It gives us an excellent idea of the furnishings of a household of the lesser *aristocrazia di toga* which differed as much from the palace of the great

nobles as it did from the miserable hovels of the lower classes. The entrance hall was furnished with settees of wood, which served both for seats and for the reception of various articles of household use. Leading out of the entrance hall was a room, containing a few chairs and a small table, from which doors opened into a study, drawing-room, and dining-room, respectively. The study was completely lined with books protected by doors filled with a fine lattice work of iron wire. In the middle of the room stood a large table, black with age and polishing. Around it were heavy chairs covered with leather.



FIG. 154. PAINTED SECRÉTAIRE. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF THE TOLENTINO GALLERIES OF ROME AND NEW YORK CITY

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Upon the table stood three inkstands, in each were rows of long quill pens.

The drawing-room was hung with yellow silk damask; the arm chairs were painted white and gold and there were two large console tables in the same style with large mirrors over them. Beside these, two tables inlaid with giallo antico, in addition to two small card tables that folded

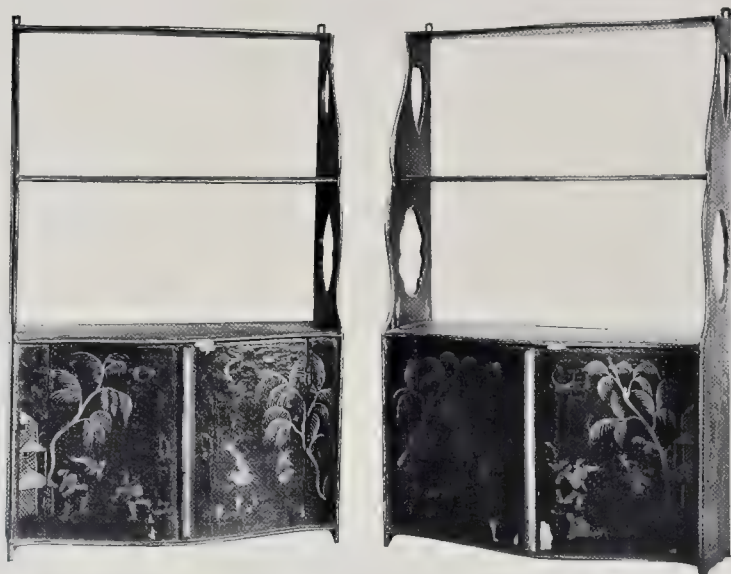


FIG. 155. LACQUER WALL CABINETS. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

up and stood against the walls. The room was lighted by two silver lamps, each with four lights, together with silver candle-sticks holding yellow tapers which stood upon a table with a clock in the Louis XV. style. On one side of the room was a white and gold spinet. Upon the walls hung some landscape paintings and two ancestral portraits of men in periwigs, while from the ceiling was suspended a Venetian glass chandelier with branches of coloured flowers.

The bedroom was large and had two windows hung with ample curtains of white muslin; over these hung silk curtains of a greenish hue,

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the same silk covering the walls, the bed and the walnut chairs. The canopied bedstead was also of walnut, and two handsomely carved walnut kneeling stools stood on either side of it. In front of these were two pieces of furniture of oval form with four curved legs. They were orna-



FIG. 156. PAINTED WALL CABINETS. VENICE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

mented with inlay and had verde antico tops with applied bronze mouldings, the same metal mounts ornamenting the legs and ending in lions' claws. On one of these stood a little altar with a small image of the Madonna before which burned a silver lamp while over the other hung a crucifix. There were also two chests of drawers in a somewhat similar style; over one of these hung a mirror with a frame ornamented in relief.

The dining-room was a spacious apartment with a large window

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FIG. 157. PAINTED COMMODE. VENICE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

opening on to a terrace in the centre of which a jet of water rose and fell in a small basin. There were also vases of shrubs and great boxes of flowers, among which were many double red carnations that filled the air with their delicious perfume. Within the room was a cupboard of dark wood that held the necessary table appointments. The cupboard had glass doors behind which were majolica dishes. Unfortunately no mention is made of the tables and chairs. The

other rooms occupied by the family were notable for their simplicity, in conformity with the grave, formal self-restraint of their lives—a striking contrast to that of the nobles.

In summing up the interiors of the great Italian houses of this period, the most notable features are great stairways, a profusion of gilding and stucco, magnificent mirrors and crystal chandeliers; walls hung with silks, often covered with pictures; floors and architraves of doors of marbles; lofty ceilings painted in fresco, gilded and painted furniture and painted doors. Everything was on a grand scale, furniture stiffly and formally arranged and the whole pervaded by a certain air of artificiality and lack of comfort.

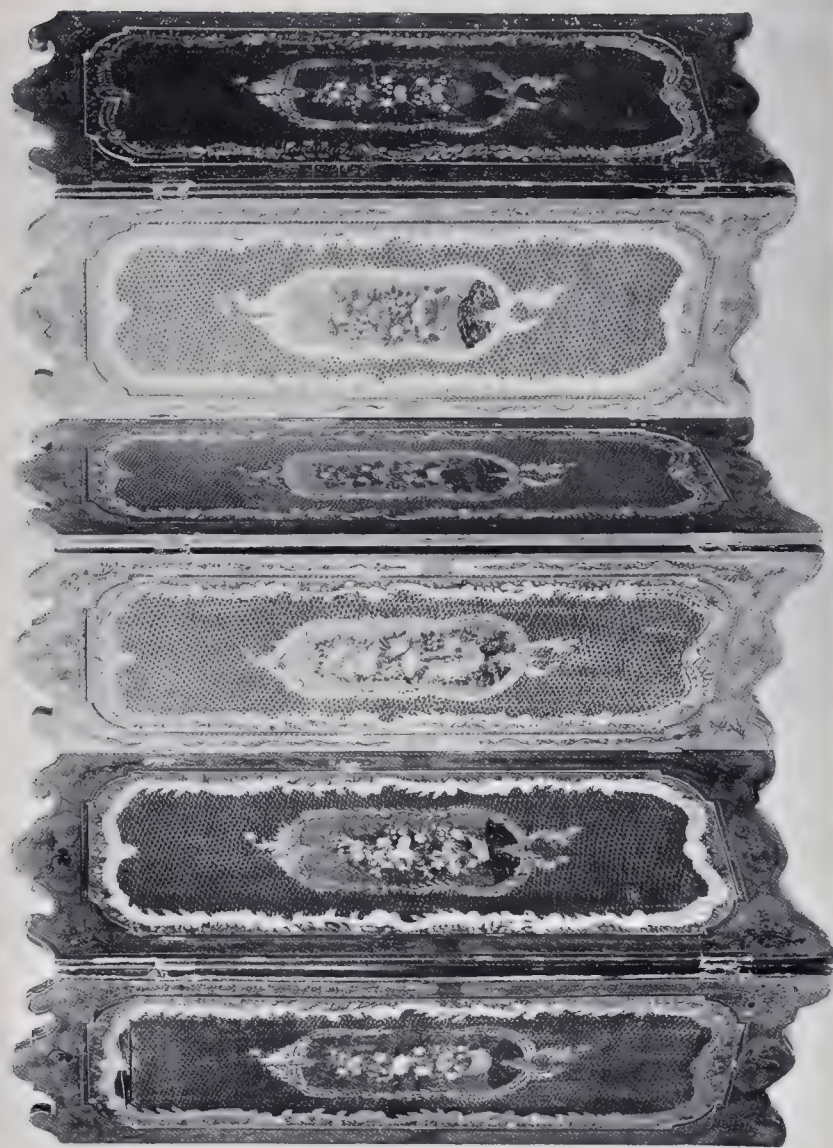


FIG. 158. PAINTED SCREEN. VENICE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSHO CIVICO, MILAN

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In this environment where furniture had to contend for a place in the magnificent ensemble, the stiff, grandiose spirit of Louis XIV. furniture found a congenial atmosphere and by the beginning of the eighteenth century had completely transformed the furniture of Northern Italy, especially in

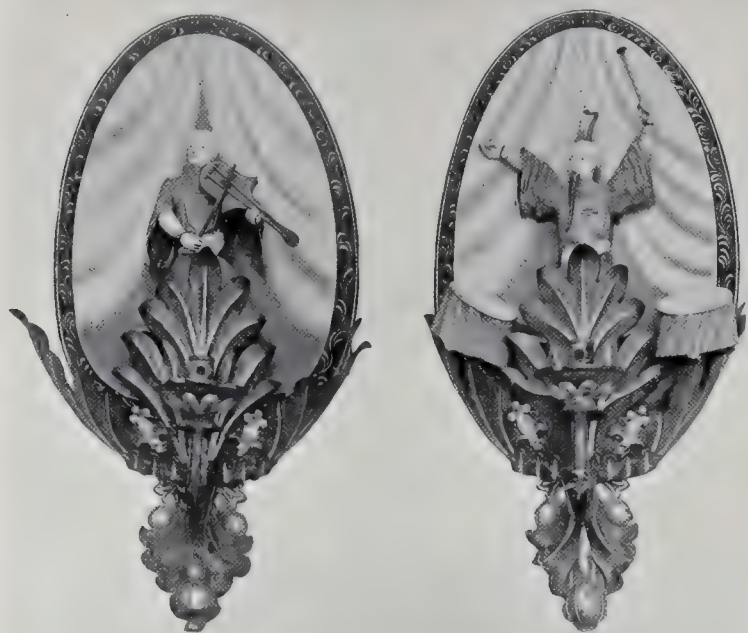


FIG. 159. PAINTED TIN SCONCES. VENICE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

the vicinity of Turin, Milan, and Venice where the engravings of the French masters of the late seventeenth century, notably those of La Pautre and Berain, had become known. Since the dawn of the French Renaissance a close artistic sympathy had existed between France and Northern Italy with an interplay of influences which was destined to continue. During the Renaissance, Italy was supreme in setting the fashions and supplying French craftsmen with ideas and motifs, but in the eighteenth century when the French were masters of Rocaille design, it was the Italians who tried to

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emulate them, while they continued to a certain extent to supply France with craftsmen and motifs. Just as Bernini's work played an important part in forming the style of Louis XIV., so Messonier, an Italian born at Turin in 1695, was as prolific in his contribution to the Louis XV. style as he was exaggerated in his method. Broadly speaking, the Rococo,



FIG. 160. PAINTED SCREEN. NORTH ITALY, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

upon which the Italian work of this period is largely based, may be said to have originated in the Baroque art of Italy, whence, during the reign of Louis XIV., it was passed into France by Bernini and there perfected.

Italy cannot, as can France, boast a famous roll of eighteenth century cabinet-makers, yet Italian names appear in the annals of the master craftsmen of France. Neither could Italy boast the national unity and wealth of the French at this time. Perhaps to this last named fact—her impoverished condition—is due much of the charm of her eighteenth century art as well as most of the unfavourable criticism directed against it. Poverty compelled her masters to use poor materials, to produce their results at the least

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cost, while in general the most pretentious effect was demanded. In consequence imitation, poor craftsmanship, and tawdriness prevailed. Spirit and artistic inventiveness, however, could not be suppressed even under such conditions and in much of the so-called inferior and debased work of the

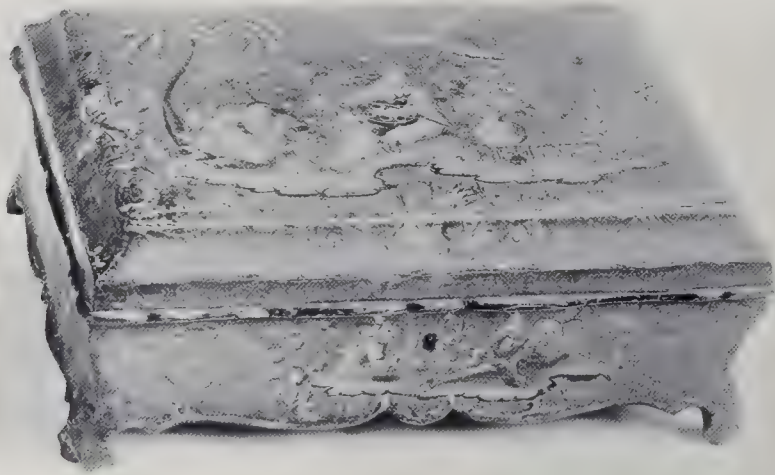


FIG. 161. PAINTED BOX. VENICE, ABOUT 1740-50
COURTESY OF LUIGI ORSELLI, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

Italians of this period—there is a quality of spontaneity and imagination that is expressed in the manner of a virile sketch. Individuality lends added charm and when sumptuousness was not sought through cheap imitation there is an intimate aesthetic charm about the simpler Italian furniture, as in the work of the provincial French designers of this period, that we do not find in many perfect Parisian products which are far too precious, too rich and royal to awaken widespread human sympathy. Only by the most discriminating taste is this quality being recognized. Perhaps it was this charm that Lady Mary Montague recognized in the furniture she saw in a villa near Maderno of which she writes: "Three miles hence [Salo] is the little town of Maderna where the last duke of Mantua built a retreat worthy a sovereign. It is now in the hands of a rich merchant who maintains it in all its beauty. The garden is in the style of LeNôtre, and the furniture



FIG. 162. PAINTED SCREEN. LOMBARDY, OR LIGURIA, ABOUT 1740 50
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 163. PAINTED BOX. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

in the best taste of Paris. I am almost ready to confess it deserves the preference to this, though built at far less expense."

However, the Italians achieved at times results of high standard both in craftsmanship and design; these results are shown in most instances where French models were actually copied. A commode of this quality, which in the illustration is difficult

to distinguish from French workmanship, is shown in Figure 111. Pieces of this type come often from the palaces of Turin, for which French furniture was not only copied but at times ordered from French makers. In form, the body is strictly in the style of the Regency; the design of the ormolu mounts of the corners, especially those motifs below the head, and the cartouche decoration applied to the curved form outlining the bottom of the front, betray a certain Italian feeling in their lack of restraint. The technique of the cabinet work and the texture of the marquetry surface are likewise in Italian feeling.

Two more examples in which the same distinguishing features may be discovered are seen in Figures 112 and 113. Again the metal sculptures, as in the majority of the few instances where they have been employed, are more freely chiselled, less well organized in drawing, and as a whole generously scaled. Emphasis should be laid on the fact that these



FIG. 164. LACQUER SECRÉTAIRE. FLORENCE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII
CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF HAROLD I. PRATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 165. PAINTED COMMODO. VENETIA, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. EGERTON WINTHROP, NEW YORK CITY

mounts are by no means characteristic of Italian craft. In fact the omission of these ornaments, their places being filled by carved wood motifs suggested by these, which are sometimes gilded, is typical of Italian work.

In Italy the Rococo style follows closely the development in France, and as the French mode grew lighter and more graceful it was only a few years later copied at the Italian centres of fashion. Two commodes of this later period (1740-60), by no means common, are shown in Figures 114 and 115. Coming originally from one of the northern provinces they represent the lighter phase of the Louis XV. style

as it was found in the few most important houses of Turin, Milan, and Genoa. These and the preceding chests have marble tops.

About this time and in the few decades following many smaller commodes of various form, similar to those shown in Figure 114, were much in demand. These, like the larger ones preceding, were generally veneered with mahogany or walnut and when elaborate ormolu mounts were employed the design of the marquetry was as a rule simple. Bands of inlay outlined the drawers while the ends often had large panels of quartered veneers bordered in a similar way. All the finest specimens were provided with marble tops of various colours.



FIG. 166. PAINTED CABINET. NORTH ITALY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF C. M. TRAVER CO., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 167. PAINTED DOORS. FLORENCE, FIRST HALF OF
THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF HAROLD I. PRATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

Decidedly more representative of the early eighteenth century Italian commode is the elaborately carved walnut one illustrated in Figure 116. Numerous specimens of higher form and larger proportions, with curved fronts and sides raised on high cabriole legs are found dating from the first three and four decades of the eighteenth century. These generally had two drawers carved with bold florid forms derived from the shell, in the manner of the illustration. This type was usually of walnut and was rarely applied with metal sculptures, excepting, perhaps, key-hole escutcheons, yet these were often of carved wood and the drawers were without handles, the key being used as a handle instead.

While the richly carved walnut chest seen in Figure 117 follows closely a French design of the Regency, its form with three tiers of drawers raised on lower cabriole legs and hoof feet was by no means unknown to the Italian cabinet-makers of Northern Italy. The scale relation of the ornament to the body and the more graceful curves out-



FIG. 168. PAINTED CORNER CABINET. VENETIA, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 169. PAINTED TIN CHANDELIER. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

lining the bottom of the front, betray a French refinement, while the vigorous bulging body and the carved decorations of the rounded corners assert their Italian origin. The handles and the key-hole escutcheon are of metal and the whole, including the top, is of walnut.

Figure 121 is one of the popular commodes of exaggerated bulging structure common to central and northern Italy, the example illustrated probably coming from the province of Lombardy.

Like many of these it is veneered with walnut instead of mahogany and is ornamented with simple bands of inlay. When carved decorations were added to veneered pieces they were equally simple, and were more often confined to outlining the lower part of the body and the rounded corners as illustrated in this figure. Commodes of this type depend largely upon their vigorous and decided form for their decorative effect. Like many Italian models it is without handles of any sort.

Figure 123, one of a pair, is a cruder and later specimen of the type pictured in Figure 116, coming from a modest house in one of the



FIG. 170. PAINTED SECRÉTAIRE. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

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FIG. 171. PAINTED MIRROR FRAME. VENICE, ABOUT 1740
FROM THE PALACE AT FOUNTAINEBLEAU

smaller provincial towns, perhaps in the Duchy of Modena. These are of considerably smaller dimensions being about three feet six inches in length and thirty-two inches in height. They are built of walnut, its fine tone and beautiful texture doing much to soften the crudeness of their technique and the freedom with which the ornament is drawn.

A commode of more unusual form displaying a much higher standard of cabinet work is illustrated in Figure 122. The curvilinear front contains two

drawers carved with panel decorations in the style of French furniture found in some of the provinces. The rounded corners and the ends with doors revealing compartments have panels executed in a similar mode. The hardware of the doors is not of contemporary origin; it was probably omitted in the original design.

In the decade or two just before the middle of the century when marquetry came into fashion many more commodes were embellished in this manner. One of the numerous representative types of better quality is shown in Figure 125. Its general form is similar to that seen in Figures 118 and 120, the inslanting body below the top drawer being almost straight instead of a bulging form. The simplicity and lightness of the legs and the apron on which the body rests suggests a period about the middle of the century. These simple marquetry pieces without carving obtain



FIG. 172. PAINTED SECRÉTAIRE. VENETIA, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 173. LACQUER SECRÉTAIRE. VENICE, FIRST HALF
OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. H. H. ROGERS, NEW YORK CITY

their decorative effect through the patterns of the veneered woods employed. Walnut predominated, it was sometimes crotched, of the burr, and often placed in panels outlined with contrasting bands of lighter woods further framed with cross bands of veneer in the manner of the example illustrated. Other fancy woods of more striking grain were used at times.

In Lombardy, especially in the vicinity of the lakes and in the province of Liguria, a small geometrical pattern was freely used in marquetry work. These patterns, as displayed in the commodes shown in Figures 126 and 127, were composed of varied abstract forms emphasized by woods of contrasting colours and laid in panels outlined with

bands of diagonal and cross bands of veneer. Figure 126, one of the graceful, characteristic Italian forms from the lake region, has its concave ends as well as its shaped top veneered with large panels in this style. Figure 127 is a variation showing more delicacy of conception. As in the preceding example the serpentine ends and the shaped top are filled with

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large panels of marquetry in the manner of those of the drawers. The delicately chiselled hardware is original and of unusually beautiful design.

The profusely carved walnut armoire in Figure 129 is by no means common to Italy. Though at Genoa the French styles of the Regency and Louis XV. were at times copied with considerable accuracy it is likely that this piece was brought from Lyons in the first decades of the eighteenth century when French products were in great demand. The consistency of the whole, the technique of the carving, and the design of the hardware, noticeably the hinges of the doors, make its Italian origin uncertain. The usual manner in which



FIG. 174. LACQUER SECRÉTAIRE. VENETIA, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF LUIGI ORSELLI, ESQ.,
NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 175. LACQUER COMMODE. NORTH ITALY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

the Italians interpreted carving of this style is illustrated in the two prie-dieu shown in Figures 130 and 131. These, as well as the commodes seen in Figures 116 and 122, betray a more vivid Italian character when compared with the armoire (Figure 129). Both prie-dieu are Lombard or Ligurian specimens, Figure 130 being entirely gilded while the later is finished in walnut. No great bedchamber of this age was considered completely furnished without a prie-dieu placed, as they usually were, at one side of the bed, while at the other the balance was obtained by a small commode. On the prie-dieu were to be found candlesticks illuminating a crucifix or Madonna which hung on the wall above.

As the lacquer of the English and French makers was inferior to that of the Eastern artisans so the work of the Italians could not in technical quality compare

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with that of England and France. Its lack of smoothness and brilliance is, however, more than compensated for in the beauty and originality of its patterns and above all in the richness and variety of its colour. Italian lacquered furniture was interpreted in much the same manner as that of the French, Dutch, and English, the earliest Italian work being more generally in the Dutch and English style, while the later gayer pieces express the spirit of the Louis XV. chinoiserie.

Spain and Portugal were among the first European nations to import lacquer from the East. Since the late fifteenth century they had enjoyed an extensive trade with the Orient whence occasional articles deco-

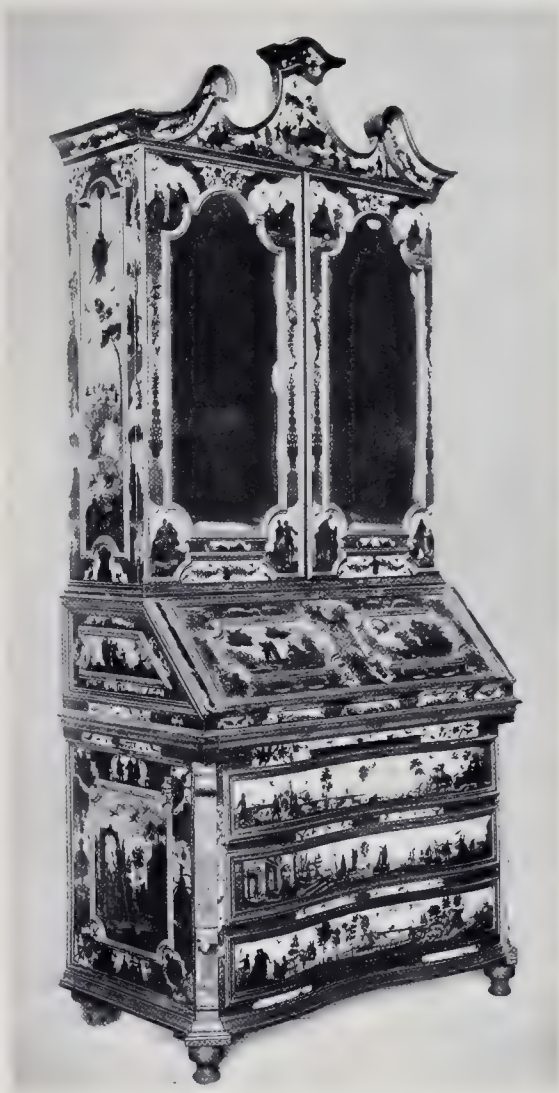


FIG. 176. SECRÉTAIRE WITH DECALCOMANIA DECORATIONS.
VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 177. PAINTED CORNER CABINETS WITH DECALCOMANIA DECORATIONS. VENETIA, ON EMILIA, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

rated in this way were brought. In the sixteenth century these countries marketed their Eastern goods principally in Holland and it is from this trade that the Dutch undoubtedly drew their first ideas and acquired their earliest appreciation of this work. In the second half of the seventeenth century, however, after the Dutch East India Company had been founded, lacquered chests and boxes were often brought home by the Dutch traders who, on finding a market for them, began to import panels for the express purpose of having them incorporated in the structure of Western furniture. Later the Dutch traders actually sent parts of cabi-

nets that had been ordered, not only by the Dutch, but by the French, English, and Flemish, to the East to be decorated. From this practice a flourishing industry grew up in Holland where Oriental workers were brought to teach the art to Western pupils, thus spreading the craze throughout Europe.

In spite of the fact that the style was popular in England in the late

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seventeenth century it does not seem to have made the same advance in Italy until the second decade of the eighteenth century, about the time native products began their vogue in France. Most of the earliest Italian pieces are, however, in form more closely related to English and Dutch designs. These are principally from Venice where during the second and third decade of the century English fashions began to manifest their influence. Between the years 1750-60 this vogue was evidently well established, for in a letter dated 1756, Lady Mary Montague remarks: "All the shops are full of English merchandise and they boast of everything as coming from London in the same style as they used to do from Paris."



FIG. 178. SECRÉTAIRE WITH DECALCOMANIA DECORATIONS.
VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

The tall *secrétaire* seems to have been the most popular medium through

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FIG. 179. WALNUT SECRÉTAIRE. LOMBARDY,
FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

which the Venetians exploited their conceptions of lacquer. These were, as Figures 173, 174, and 175 show, decidedly in the style prevailing in England during the reign of Queen Anne. This period of Venetian work, which may be dated from 1720-1740, is marked by more exaggerated structural form and fantastic decoration exploited in a much wider range of colour harmonies. Green, black, red, and yellow were all used as backgrounds for decorations of gold and colour. Of these green and black are the most common, yellow the rarest, and red the most splendid.

Soft yellowish green and gold forms the exterior colour scheme of

the secretaire of unusually fine quality and small proportions seen in Figure 173, which is less than six feet in height. Here the lacquer is directly copied from Eastern design, while its quality is of the softer Venetian character. The lower serpentine body contains three drawers, each outlined with gold moulds, the lower two containing panels of Chinese figures and landscapes. The outer surface of the fall front as well as the panels of the sides are treated in a similar manner. A pleasing variety of colour, introduced into the interior scheme of the upper arched top body, is seen through the glass panel of the door. Here the ground colour is light green on which are painted sprays of Chinese flowers and an exotic bird in tones of blue-violet and neutral red. Decorating the framework of the doors are raised designs of little figures and birds arranged in panels. The sides of this section are also ornamented.

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Another bureau of green and gold lacquer is illustrated in Figure 175. This uncommonly tall, narrow form, like that of the preceding example, resembles an English design. The door of the upper body, with a large mirror flanked by fluted pilasters, reveals an interior fitted with shelves and compartments as does the fall front of the desk with its outer surface showing a decoration of slightly raised and gilded relief depicting Chinese figures and architecture in landscape. The same scheme is repeated on the drawers. Venetian red is the body colour of the secrétaire seen in Figure 174. The lower part with an interrupted serpentine front contains three drawers,



FIG. 180. SECRÉTAIRE WITH INLAY DECORATIONS. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY

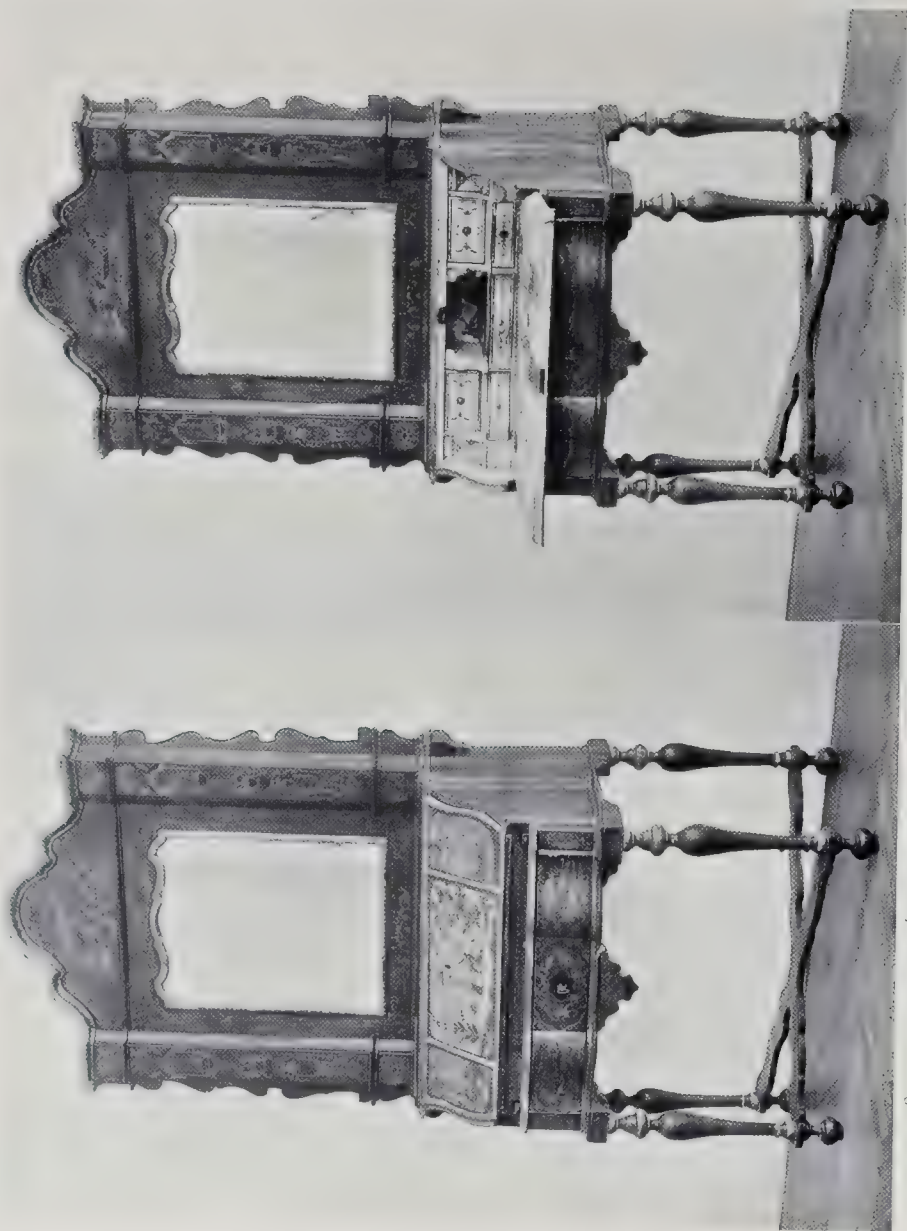


FIG. 181. LACQUER SECRÉTAIRE. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY. FIG. 182 (RIGHT). SHOWING THE INTERIOR OF FIG. 181
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. HOWARD CUSHING, NEW YORK CITY

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each with Chinese figures and landscape motifs in gold, and medallions of naturalistic flowers on a pale green ground. In a like manner the fall front of the *secrétaire* is painted, the frame of the double curved top doors with mirror panels, and the crowning feature, topped by vigorous moulds and turned ornaments, pre-



FIG. 183. PAINTED TABLE. VENICE, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

sented a gorgeous mass of old colour tones in an original adaptation of Eastern motifs.

Lacquer seems to have been as much in fashion at Genoa and Turin as it was at Venice. It was not confined to the embellishment of furniture, but was sometimes used in the architectural scheme as at "La Venerie", the villa near Turin built by Duke Carlo Emanuel II. about the middle of the seventeenth century, and greatly admired by the French for its architecture and gardens. Here in the apartments of the Duchess was a *cabinet de toilette* and a boudoir wainscoted in the finest old lacquer. An English lady writes in 1770: "These panels abound with the beautiful green leaves and silver dragons so much admired by all connoisseurs in Japan; and in the boudoir, the compartments represent landscapes with stags, and Indian warriors on horseback, in bas-relief incrustated in Pierre de Lac, which is exceedingly fine. The above pieces of Japan were presented by Prince Eugene to the Princess Victoire from whom they came to the House of Savoy." Though these were evidently of Chinese or Japanese origin, the lacquered wainscoting in an apartment in the Royal Palace at Turin appears, from the same lady's

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account, to be Italian work, for as the old document runs, "The Queen's cabinet de toilette, which is a cube of thirty feet, is entirely wainscoted with Japan, either it never was fine of the sort, or else it is spoiled, for the



FIG. 184. LACQUER DESK. LIGURIA, OR PIEDMONTE, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

varnish is faulty and the grain coarse." These are criticisms which might justly apply to most European efforts.

Some successful specimens of lacquered furniture come from Genoa. Though a few of these may have been brought by Eastern galleys with which her harbour was constantly crowded, other pieces such as that illustrated in Figure 135, with a body of Italian origin, were either produced by native artists or else sent to the Orient to be decorated. This is one of the earlier Genoese examples of finer quality, of generous dimensions and un-

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common form. On a ground of black is a design brought out in an exceptionally fine gold tone, further enhanced by small areas of colour. The top is of cream marble.

Lacquer work, however, plays an insignificant part in the embellish-



FIG. 185. SHOWING THE INTERIOR OF FIG. 184

ment of Italian furniture compared with that of painted decoration. The art of painting is supreme in Italy and perhaps much of the genius that glorified Renaissance canvases was diverted to the embellishment of commodes, tables, and chairs in the eighteenth century.

At Venice the art of furniture painting reached its highest expression. In the early years of the eighteenth century, when the heavier forms gave way to lighter and more graceful lines, furniture treated in this style began its vogue, and by the middle of the century had reached an unsurpassable state of sensuous colour and rich design. Furniture by this time was

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FIG. 186. CARVED AND GILDED TABLE. TURIN, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE LOUVRE COLLECTION

more varied in shape and size. Numerous smaller articles such as dressing-tables, writing-tables and desks; console tables and variously shaped little tables with secret drawers and compartments or with folding tops

that could be converted into gaming tables; little hanging wall cabinets and mirror frames in addition to chairs, settees, chaise longues, stools, benches, beds, and commodes, all afforded endless opportunity for the painters to display their inexhaustible decorative inventions.

The prevailing forms were based on the French Louis Quinze style.



FIG. 187. CARVED AND GILDED TABLE. ROME, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE PALAZZO SPADA, ROME

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Everything in this age must please or amuse; Italians, especially the Venetians, could not tolerate seriousness or pain, therefore their furniture with pleasing curves and unsurpassable colours was made still further entertaining with strange flowers, birds, landscapes, and chinoiserie. Colour ran riot in exquisite harmonies; yellows, creams, blues, and yellow-red backgrounds are decorated with various hues of finely proportioned areas of complementary colours. Blue and green became lovely backgrounds for reds, cream, and gold.



FIG. 189. CONSOLE TABLE AND MIRROR.
EARLY XVIII CENTURY
IN THE PALAZZO ROSA, GENOA

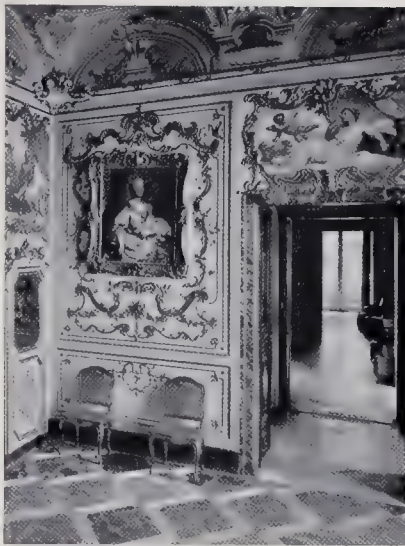


FIG. 188. AN INTERIOR, THE FIRST HALF
OF THE XVIII CENTURY
IN THE PALAZZO ROSA, GENOA

Yet if we scratch below the surface of this enchanting sensuousness the poverty and decadence of Venice is evident. Beneath surfaces of richly coloured lacquer and paint the graceful forms are found to be crudely and hastily constructed of the most inferior woods. Paint was often of water colour applied on a ground of gesso—a white powder mixed with glue. This provided a foundation of velvet-like texture which took the water paints with great advantage, a coat of varnish giving more permanence to the surface. This economy in the mat-

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ter of painting materials gave rise to the most beautiful of colours. Though less durable, the result far surpasses the hard enamel surfaces of French and English work in the variety and richness of colour as well as in the quality of texture. The crowning glory of eighteenth century Venetian



FIG. 190. CARVED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. LIGURIA, OR PIEDMONTE, EARLY XVIII CENTURY

COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

furniture is its colour and texture and the supreme examples deserve a place among the greatest achievements of the eighteenth century decorative arts.

Cabinets such as great armoires, corner cupboards, secrétaires, and commodes afforded ample surfaces for elaborate designs similar to that painted on the magnificent Venetian armoire illustrated in Figure 132. This is one of the earlier pieces of the eighteenth century as its structural form, prominent moulds, and decorations derived from Bériani inventions would suggest. The motifs are olive-green and the ground gray-green. A splendid bureau desk also of early eighteenth century Venetian work is

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seen in Figure 136. Again the space of the body shows the influence of the Louis Quatorze style, its curved front and sides, and its canted corners adding a feeling of grace and lightness to this generously proportioned piece. The drawers, outlined with moulds of gold, like the ends and the outer and inner surface of the fall front, are completely covered with an all-over diaper pattern of green on a soft yellow ground. In the centre of the diaper is a small red-purple flower with green leaves. Decorating the small drawers of the upper



FIG. 192. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. VENETIA, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF LUIGI ORSELLI, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 191. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. VENICE, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF HAROLD I. PRATT, ESQ.,
NEW YORK CITY

compartment is a smaller diaper pattern of similar colour set in panels of fanciful forms, the colour scheme being similar to that of the exterior. The block bases of the canted corners are painted to imitate marble of a yellowish tone.

Another writing desk of this construction but smaller proportions is illustrated in Figure 137. The curves

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of the front and sides are, however, more decidedly interrupted and the carved feet are treated in a more ornate way. Decorating the light green ground are rococo patterns etched on a surface of gilded gesso, while on the fall front of the writing compartment, composed in an oval medallion, is a well painted group of figures.

Commodes are among the most successful Venetian specimens of painted furniture. Those from the town palaces, of extremely elaborate build, were profuse with carving or gesso relief brought out in gold on grounds of light colours. To these were added painted designs composed of flowers and rococo scrolls. In form as well as in decoration, Figures 138, 139, and 141 adequately sum up the richest specimens dating about the middle of the century—the golden age of Venetian Rococo. Never in the history of furniture construction, even in France, was such amazing skill displayed as is shown in the involved curvilinear forms combined in the structure of the first of these, seen in Figure 138. The body, with bowed and shaped front containing two drawers panelled with carved rococo scrollings, shaped sides with similar panels, and delicate, graceful



FIG. 193. CARVED AND PAINTED HARPSICHORD. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

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cabriole legs, is lacquered a light tone of green with parts of the ornaments in gold. With an equally marvellous form Figure 139 has added to its ensemble a variety of colourful floral motifs, both in the flat and carved. These are painted in natural colours on a background of yellow. The moulds are gilded and the top is marbleized.

Figure 141 is one of the smaller commodes that generally accom-



FIG. 194. CARVED AND GILDED TABLE. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

panied larger ones in the bedrooms of Venetian palaces, where they were found placed on either side of magnificent canopied beds of similar style, hung with the richest of silks. In colour as well as form this rare little specimen is an excellent study of the Venetian Rococo. On a background tone of greenish-gold are scrolls and moulds of green in addition to well-painted floral motifs in which tones of red are prominent. From the original surface of this piece some idea may be gained of the Venetian painters' method. First a background coat of white gesso was laid on a tone of light blue green, which formed a background for darker blue-green scrolls and naturalistic flowers; over the whole was laid a varnish glaze of

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yellow, keying all the hues to yellow and producing its mellow, harmonious tone.

Of three commodes still intact, consisting of one large and two smaller ones, designed *en suite* for a Venetian bedchamber, two are pictured in Figure 143. Though of the same general structure as those shown in the



FIG. 195. TWO MIRROR FRAMES. VENICE, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF LUIGI ORSELLI, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

preceding illustrations, the decorations of the rounded corners and cabriole legs, and the moulds that frame the shaped marble tops are indications of the transition period, which at Venice found an unusually graceful expression between the years 1760-75.

In the revival or introduction of styles, ornament, which is most easily grasped, generally appears first. It is often applied to prevailing structural forms in a manner not always consistent, yet these very inconsistencies at

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times produce results of individual character, as illustrated in Figure 145. This figure combining a characteristic Venetian body, cabriole legs showing a recognition of Chippendale design, and painted motifs in the style of Louis Seize, dates well into the second half of the eighteenth century



FIG. 196. CARVED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

as its more classic type of decoration and more vigorously drawn cabriole legs attest. Thomas Chippendale published his first book in 1754 and a few copies undoubtedly found their way into Italy at the height of the Louis XV. influence, accounting to some extent for the strange yet sometimes successful combination of English and French motifs in Venetian furniture of the sixth and seventh decades of the eighteenth cen-

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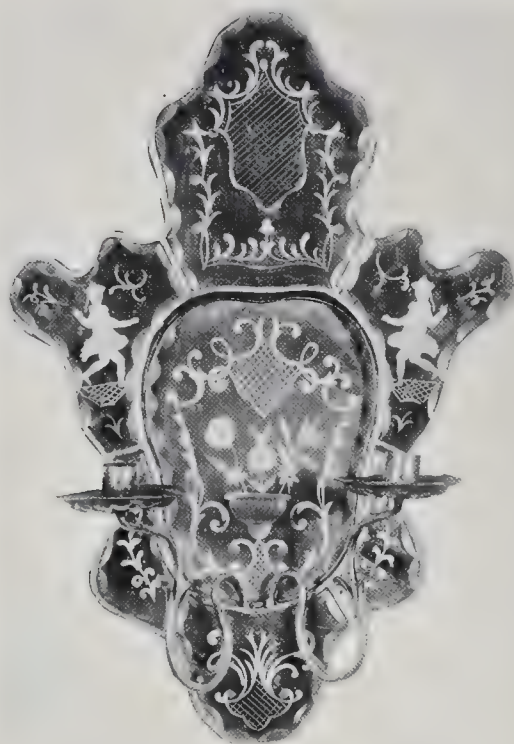


FIG. 197. ETCHED MIRROR SCENCE. VENICE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ture. However, a form of the cabriole leg showing an adaptation of the Regency hoof foot, and the duck, ball and claw foot of the Queen Anne and Early Georgian styles had been profusely used by the Italian designers since 1720.

Returning to the commode illustrated in Figure 145, a description should be given of its colour which is of considerable decorative value. The entire background of the body is painted a soft, vibrating Indian yellow, while the simple mould outlining the

drawers and the curved lines of the bottom, flowing gracefully into the cabriole legs, are brought out in green. On the two drawers and the ends swags of green husks are suspended from bowknots of light violet-red ribbon, an added interest being given by the green leaves in relief banding the bottom of the front and sides. The top is of red Siena marble.

Figure 146 is another of the later types combining an earlier form with a later style of embellishment. The clumsy body with interrupted serpentine front, as well as the cabriole leg with originally modified hoof feet, is reminiscent of earlier work, while its embellishments consisting of

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painted and carved ornaments have been modified by the classic revival. The colour of the background is cream; the flat decoration of the drawers and ends is in light blue-green hatched with gold, while the carved motifs of the leg, the bottom of the body, and the rounded corners are of the same hue. The gilt bronze hardware is the original.



FIG. 198. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND

Figure 147 though crudely constructed of an inferior wood is covered with a beautiful tone of green, forming a background for gold and rich contrasting colours. The two drawers of the serpentine front are outlined with a pattern of gold etched with fine lines of black. In the centre of each are rococo panels framed with a similar decoration, having backgrounds of yellow for baskets of flowers and fruits in naturalistic tones of red, blue, and green. At either side of these are cockatoos with bright plumage of blue, green, and red. Filling the ends of the commode are more panels framed with rococo scrolls of gold holding vases of

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flowers which repeat the colours of those on the drawers, while outlining the bottom of the whole and ornamenting the rounded corners is the same black and gold design. The top, like the ends, is adorned with a medallion of flowers.

Many of the simpler commodes from the Venetian villas though of less elaborate form, crudely constructed and hastily painted, display at times a pleasing type of decoration. By the middle



FIG. 199. PAINTED METAL APPLIQUE. VENICE, ABOUT 1750

COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 200. CARVED AND GILDED STAND. VENICE, ABOUT 1740-50

THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

of the century the Venetian villeggiatura had in reality become a continuation of the carnival unmasked. Pageants, frolics, and caprices; lords and ladies and stately cardinals, in powdered wigs, flowered skirts and flaming silks; hunting parties in white buckskin and mauve silk; frolics on the river in the light of paper lanterns; veritable banquets in cool glades, spread upon fine laces with cups and platter of silver; and gilded and painted coaches rattling through dozing villages, all went to make up the rural scenes of the Venetian villeggiatura. The furniture and interiors of villas must be in accord with this artificial, decorative life, so countless summer houses, with painted

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and gilded reception rooms, great salons and no end of guest rooms had to be provided with a wealth of colourful furniture. For their villas were not real country houses in the sense of many of those of Lombardy and Tuscany, yet they were far more comfortable and livable than those of the Romans, who regarded their villas merely as casini or pleasure houses.

About this time and during the two or three decades following, when



FIG. 201. CARVED AND PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ORME WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

Italian taste, noticeably in the north, had been modified by the lighter and more graceful style that was making rapid headway in France, many of the commodes made for the Venetian villas were in this simpler taste, ornamented with lighter painted inventions, as shown in the Venetian example illustrated in Figure 149. This, the most successful and graceful of the type without embellishment in relief, has a slightly bowed and serpentine front and subtly curving sides, having large panels outlined with scrolls of equally subtle form painted on a cream ground. Another commode of

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similar though less graceful structure is illustrated in Figure 148. In this instance the ground work is an antique yellow tone on which are decorations in harmonious hues of green. The top is treated in the same manner, and the hardware is of original design.

Because of an unfounded assertion it is generally assumed that all furniture of this character comes from Venice but while she can boast, without doubt, of the most precious existing specimens, delightfully painted furniture was by no means confined to the palaces and villas of the Venetian patricians. For the houses at



FIG. 202. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. EMILIA, ABOUT 1740
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. WALTER BLISS, NEW YORK CITY

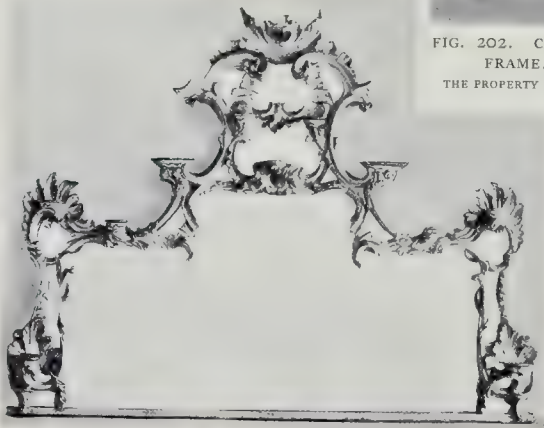


FIG. 203. CARVED AND PAINTED MIRROR FRAME. EMILIA, ABOUT 1740-50
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

Brescia and the villas scattered throughout that vicinity, a considerable quantity of furniture was produced, notable for its charming decorations of painted flowers. It must be recalled that Brescia, at this time the most populous and

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FIG. 204. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. VENICE,
ABOUT 1740-50
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES O. GREEN, NEW YORK CITY

favoured of the Venetian towns, had a large class of rich and industrious inhabitants and many noble families living in well-built houses. Here flourished a notable school of flower painters whose pictures, especially those of Conte Giorgio Durante (1683-1755), were found in many of the houses in Brescia, Venice, and Turin and were much in demand, as Lanzi has related, "no less on account of the exact imitation of life than for the taste of composition and the

truly beautiful attitudes in which they were drawn."

The English travellers of the eighteenth century may have deplored the absence of flowers in the magnificent old gardens but they could hardly have complained of their lack in the decorative schemes of the interiors, for Italy abounded in painters of flowers. In addition to scores of easel pictures, floral canvases were inserted in panels over doors, over mantel and console mirrors, and in various other ways, while the author of "Arcadia in Brenta" informs us that in the Venetian villas even the ceilings of kitchens were painted with floral decorations. From country houses also



FIG. 205. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR
FRAME. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF THE TOLENTINO GALLERIES OF NEW YORK
AND ROME



FIG. 206. PORCELAIN MIRROR FRAME.
CAPO DI MONTE, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ., MIAMI,
FLORIDA



FIG. 207. CARVED WOOD CONSOLE TABLE, PAINTED AND GILDED. LUCCA, ABOUT 1740 50
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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have come hangings designed in this manner. In the Vigna della Regina, near Turin, we know there were several apartments "some hung with Indian taffeta, others with painted linen." Then there were hangings for beds, patterns for needlework, screens, and little articles of the toilet table that came in for no small share of this pleasing type of embellishment.

Floral painted furniture from the vicinity of Brescia, like that from most of the Venetian villas, is distinguished by its simplicity of form, its lack of ornament in relief, an absence of gilding, and handsome



FIG. 208. CARVED AND PAINTED TABLE.
VENICE, ABOUT 1740-50

THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ., MIAMI, FLORIDA



FIG. 209. CARVED AND PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. VENICE,
ABOUT 1740

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

marble tops. Its colour decoration, however, more than compensates for the absence of finer materials as the commode illustrated in Fig. 152 proves. On the front and ends of this graceful bulging form festoons and sprays of blue and red flowers and soft green leaves are broadly rendered on a rich

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FIG. 210. CARVED WALNUT CENTRE TABLE. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1740
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES O. GREEN, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 211. WALNUT TABLE. EMILIA, ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF LAVEZZO AND BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

cream ground. These are in their original state as they were found under

a layer of muddy brown paint.

The top is less fortunate, having had originally similar decorations or having been painted to imitate marble, as many of this character were. In Figure 153 another form is illustrated. Here the background is of a soft greenish-yellow while the predominating tone of the design is green with touches of red, blue, and yellow.

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More carefully decorated is the combination writing desk and cabinet illustrated in Figure 154. This is undoubtedly a Venetian product of the higher quality. Sprays of flower in naturalistic tones of soft red, blue,



FIG. 212. CARVED WALNUT TABLE. LOMBARDY, OR LIGURIA, ABOUT
1740-50
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

and dark green are composed on a light green ground while the panels of the doors, the sides, the fall front of the desk, and the cabriole legs are outlined with bands of blue.

Quaintly painted furniture is sometimes found in the vicinity of Modena, Parma, Piacenza, and Cremona as well as at Brescia. At Modena there was the magnificent palace of the Frenchified Modenese dukes with rich apartments and a considerable library. In addition to the sumptuous Ducal palace of Parma there were the palaces of the Pallavicini, Rossi, Torelli, Gisberti, Sanvitali, and others mentioned by Nugent. Piacenza was full of low and, according to eighteenth century standards, prettily built houses, while at Cremona there were fanciful little palazzi of two stories in the style of the Palazzo Stanga. No doubt, from the small

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houses of this upper central section of Italy much of this cruder, yet more quaintly painted furniture, that has been too freely attributed to Venice, has its origin.

Nowhere, outside of France, was the Chinoiserie style treated in a more enchanting manner than in Italy. Though Chinese art was taken

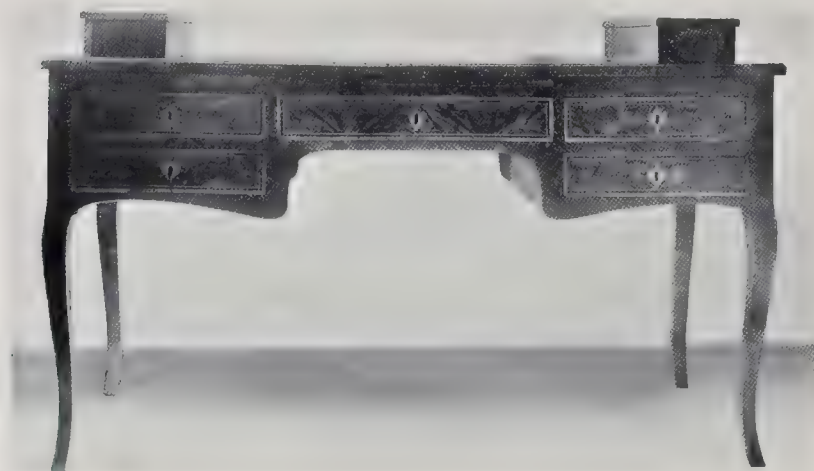


FIG. 213. MARQUETRY WRITING TABLE. TUSCANY, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. EGERTON WINTHROP, NEW YORK CITY

no more seriously than it was in France, yet it supplied the rococo designer with no end of novel and entertaining motifs for decoration. About the year 1710 a Saxon chemist by the name of Meissen discovered a process of making porcelain in the Chinese style, stimulating intense interest in Chinese art. About the same time Bouvet, the Jesuit priest, presented to Louis XIV. for the Emperor of China, forty-nine volumes of Chinese drawings which provided an inexhaustible source for the decorative painters. Other documents were soon offered in French publications. Fraisse, a painter in the household of the Prince de Condé, made an extensive collection of Chinese and Japanese drawings and Indian and Persian prints, many of which he reproduced in his publication, "Livres de dessins

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Chinois," printed in 1735. This was followed by Huet's lively and amusing series of "Singeries, ou differentes actions de la vie humaine."

Venetians, always eager for a new fashion, were not long in accepting the style and in the second and third decade of the century, when its



FIG. 214. WALNUT WRITING TABLE. NORTH ITALY, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

vogue was fully established, there began to appear in the painted designs for cabinets, tables, chairs, screens, little coffers, and various other household articles, pagodas, temples and grottos, peopled with little Chinese figures, in addition to all sorts of strange flowers and birds. So prevalent was this craze that many artists specialized in the style. As early as the year 1725 we find in the register of a Venetian parish the name of Angela Caterina, "depintor alla Chinese." And the manner was not confined to painters of furniture, for masters no less renowned than the great Tiepolo came under the spell of the style.

Of the furniture, the screens and cabinets are the most splendid.



FIG. 215. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. VENICE, FIRST
HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELIZABETH HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 216. CARVED AND GILDED SIDE CHAIR. ROME, FIRST
HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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While many of them were of lacquer with raised figures similar to those illustrated in the foregoing figures, many more had flat renderings in a wealth of lighter and gayer colours, like the screen from the Museo Civico at Milan, illustrated in Figure 158. In the centre of the panels outlined with a framework of Chinese motifs are exquisite medallions framed in a similar style each with a centre decoration composed of a basket of flowers in the Chinese taste. Equally fine is the colouring of the whole, peacock-blue and green, lemon yellow and red-violet tones being used in an uncommon harmony in one of the finest Venetian products of the eighteenth century. In the same museum is preserved the little painted commode illustrated in Figure 157. Though in an unfortunate state of repair, perhaps it is equally fortunate in escaping the hand of the merciless restorer. On a lightly tinted background the front and sides are panelled with a delightful semi-Chinese scroll work that encloses exotic landscapes with figures having the delicacy and charm of Pillement's style.

A five-fold screen executed in tempera in the Chinoiserie taste is illustrated in Figure 160. On a background of gray, outlined with painted moulds in neutral tones of orange, is a landscape with a foreground in naturalistic colours, yellow architecture with vermilion and blue roofs, little Chinese figures in the same brilliant hues, and trees in browns and blue-greens, with yellow-red fruits.



FIG. 217. CARVED, PAINTED, AND GILDED
SIDE CHAIR. VENICE, FIRST HALF
OF THE XVIII CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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The painted tin appliqués illustrated in Figure 159 show to what extent this entertaining style was carried. These are part of a set of six. Against backgrounds painted with yellow-red draperies, hung from oval frames of green and yellow are gaily costumed little Chinese musicians in full relief, each playing on a different musical instrument. From the green leaves veined with yellow below extend holders for candles adorned with the same colours.

Small articles such as hanging wall-cabinets and bookshelves, in addition to mirrors and boxes for dressing-tables, were made as delightful as they were frivolous with designs prized for their daring colour harmonies. Two pairs of little hanging cupboards with shelves, cherished by Venetians for their smaller apartments, are shown in Figures 155 and 156. The former, with shaped ends pierced between the shelves and delicately curved fronts formed of two doors, has a background of a greenish black hue; on the doors are decorations in gold, soft yellow and red-orange, partly in relief. On the ends are painted flat designs in gold; these, like the doors and shelves, are outlined with a band of gold. A



FIG. 218. WALNUT SOFA WITH NEEDLEWORK COVER. FLORENCE, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

COURTESY OF F. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 219. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, OR VENETIA, FIRST
HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

more decorative colour harmony is illustrated in the lovely little corner wall cabinets illustrated in Figure 156. Here on a ground work of soft light red, flowers with old tones of blue predominating are carefully drawn.

The splendid cabinet of generous dimensions shown in Figure 166 is also made rich and colourful with floral motifs. A lower body, con-

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taining three drawers with an interrupted curved front, rests on legs derived from a Louis XIV. design, braced in the front with shaped stretchers while the upper section has an arched and moulded top and double doors revealing shelved compartments. The body colour of the whole is a dark, rich blue-green. On this are placed the medallion-like decorations composed of vases of well-painted flowers in naturalistic tones and gaily plumaged birds on a yellow-cream ground. In the four corners of the doors similar birds are



FIG. 220. WALNUT CHAIR. FLORENCE, ABOUT 1740-50

FROM THE SALVADORI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 221. WALNUT CHAIR. VENICE, ABOUT 1740-50

FROM THE KUNSTGEWERBE MUSEUM, BERLIN

repeated, while the decorative parts of the drawers crowning cornice, legs, and stretchers are composed of floral motifs harmonizing with those of the doors.

Highly characteristic Venetian design and colouring is seen in the crudely constructed corner cabinet illustrated in Figure 168. These designs composed of flowers and rococo scrolls were a favourite and successful type of the Venetian school of decorative painters, at their best, between the years 1730-50. On square panels of old yellow ground is painted a rococo

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design in soft blues and browns, forming a framework for compositions of flowers of various naturalistic hues, soft reds, blues, and yellow predominating. The stiles of the doors and those of the narrow panels to which



FIG. 222. PAINTED CHAIR. VENICE, ABOUT 1740
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

they are hinged, as well as the moulds of the cornice, are of silver gilt, while on the cabriole legs and curved apron, the panels flanking the doors and the frieze of the cornice are scrolls and floral motifs.

The double doors illustrated in Figure 167, though from a Florentine palace, are in the Venetian style. They belong to a school of decora-

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FIG. 223. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR.
VENICE, ABOUT 1720
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

tion dating between the years 1710-30. The background colour is yellow, the decorations of the stiles are blue, while the shaped panels, framed with vigorous molds, are painted with rococo designs in green and little figures in tones of red and blue. Doors of this description played a prominent part in Venetian interiors. A valuable document of the eighteenth century relating to these and other painted features is given in the following description: "The palaces at Venice are much in the same taste; having seen one or two, you have in a manner seen all. The Venetians cover their walls with pictures, and never think their apartment properly

furnished until they have such as shall fill all the spaces from top to bottom, so as completely to hide the hanging. The palaces in general are furnished with velvet and damask fringed or laced with gold. The floors are of a composition which imitates various marbles and has an excellent effect; but what I admire very much and is universally found in all the houses, as well as palaces, is the elegant manner in which they paint the doors, architraves, skirting boards, and all their wainscoting; it is smooth as ivory, of very pale tints for the ground and prettily ornamented with various devices, festoons, fruits, etc. They also paint in fresco on the walls, having no exceedingly good idea of perspective; this is to be met within the poorest houses and where they do not go to the expense of painting the walls then

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whitewash is of an uncommon neatness; it is glossy, of a soft colour, and never comes off.

The numerous tall *secrétaires* afforded a medium for some of the most extravagant and brilliant work of the Venetian furniture painters. Though many are based on the Queen Anne structure, many more display originality both of form and decoration. One of a general type is shown in Figure 172. This, like so many of the



FIG. 224. GILDED ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, OR VENETIA,
ABOUT 1740
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

lacquered ones, is a structure common in England between the years 1710-40 and prevailing throughout Italy, north of Tuscany at about the same time and some years after. But as usual when compared to English work they are more crudely constructed and more bizarre of form. They are, however, chiefly valued for their highly decorative colour, which, in

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FIG. 225. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. PIEDMONTE,
FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

the most successful examples, more than compensates for the absence of the higher quality of craftsmanship, as in Figure 172, where on a body ground of light blue-green are represented landscapes with figures in naturalistic tones enclosed in rococo scrolls. The arched panelled doors contain mirrors and the top is crowned with a carved and gilded decoration composed of a shell and floral motif, while the interiors of the

writing compartments and the upper body are painted a brilliant Venetian red.

Another painted *secrétaire* of the highest quality illustrating one of the most elaborate Venetian structural forms is shown in Figure 170. All the painted decorations are in tones of green on a ground of forest-green lacquer. In the panels of the drawers, the ends, and the fall front of the writing compartment, are delightful little landscapes and figures delicately painted by an artist of considerable ability. Framing these panels are carved rococo scrolls, which, like the other moulds and carved ornaments, are gilded. The interior of the bureau is painted in imitation of green marble.

Quite a novel structure is shown in the Venetian *secrétaire* seen

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in Figure 181. Turned legs and diagonal curvilinear stretchers, having the appearance of earlier work, support a writing compartment with a fall front that is surmounted by a mirror in a peculiar flat structure of ornamental significance. Yet the decorative value of the colour is more important than the novelty of structure, this being fortunately true in many examples of Italian furniture of this period where sheer beauty of colour



FIG. 226. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. VENETIAN, ABOUT 1740
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY

often diverts attention from poor proportions and faulty construction. In this instance the whole of the exterior with the exception of the fall front is painted red with a fine gold line patterned in a semi-Chinese style. The front of the desk is divided into three panels, the centre one with a background of yellow is painted with Chinese figures and floral motives in tones of red, blue, and green. Flanking this are panels of light blue-green with decorations of blue and yellow-green. Equally gay is the interior with motifs of red and green on a ground of light yellow.

It was indeed a period of colour mania and while sheer beauty of colour justified any means with these delightful polychrome-fanatics it is difficult for us to accept with any degree of seriousness all of that decalco-



FIG. 227. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. PIEDMONTE, ABOUT 1755-65
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. EGERTON WINTHROP, NEW YORK CITY

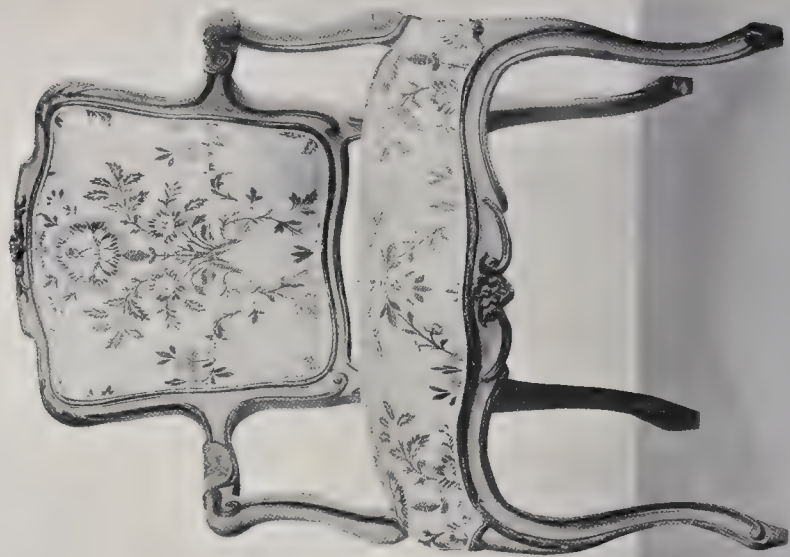


FIG. 228. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. EMLIA, ABOUT 1760-70
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. LESLIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 220. PAINTED SOFA. VENETIAN, ABOUT 1750-60
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 230. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR.
TUSCANY, ABOUT 1750
FROM THE SALVADORI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 231. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. EMILIA,
ABOUT 1750
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 232. WALNUT SETTEE. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1740-50
FROM THE SALVADORI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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mania bedecked furniture surviving from this period. Yet the most prejudiced must acknowledge that it often achieves splendid decorative effects in colour, and its variety of little figures, landscapes, and flowers affords no end of entertainment. It is uncertain whether or not this very amusing style had its origin at Venice. Though found there in great profusion, we know it to have had a considerable vogue in Paris in the early part of the eighteenth century when the Parisians had a passion for cutting up coloured prints and using them to decorate their furnishings. Aissé in one of her letters writes: "We are here in the height of a new passion for cutting up coloured engravings, just as we were last year for cup and ball. Every lady, great and small, is cutting away. These cuttings are pasted on sheets of paste-board and then varnished. We make wall panels, screens, and fire boards of them. There are books and engravings which cost up to 100 lires and women are mad enough to cut up engravings worth a 100 lires apiece. If this fashion continues they will cut up Raphaels."



FIG. 233. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. EMILIA,
OR TUSCANY, ABOUT 1740
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR



FIG. 234. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. EMILIA,
ABOUT 1750-60
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 235. PAINTED ARM CHAIRS WITH NEEDLE-WORK COVERS. LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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At Venice we find more serious pieces of furniture including secrétaires, commodes, and even tables and chairs, besides no end of smaller things such as mirror frames, little screens, boxes, trays, and toilet articles ornamented in this manner. The process was as simple as the results were spontaneous, consequently it became, as at Paris, a gentle pastime for a

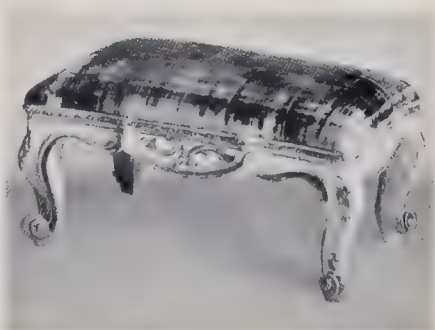


FIG. 236. GREEN AND GOLD FOOTSTOOL. VENE-
TIAN, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

score of idling ladies. First a painted ground was prepared, on this were pasted the various motifs and then to make the surface more permanent, a coat of varnish was applied. Not only were the decorations cut from prints but at Venice we learn that paper motifs were prepared especially for this purpose. In Remondini's catalogue are mentioned "copper plates of Chinese subjects to be printed on fine paper and to be used to ornament cabinets, boxes, trays, and wooden fruit dishes."

Two cabinets treated in this style are seen in Figures 176 and 178. Of these, the first named, coming from the Museo Civico at Milan, shows work less characteristic of the amateur. Its panels contain delightful pastoral scenes, land and sea scapes and gay little Watteauesque figures, presenting a mass of fine, mellow colouring. The general background tone is yellow; the moulds are gilded and the decorative motifs are of a wide range of hues. Mirrors set in the shaped panels of the doors add much to the gayety of the ensemble. Figure 178 is one of a pair of smaller and more unusual proportions. Three panelled drawers with figures in landscape occupy the slightly curved front; the corners are canted and the ends are filled with a raised panel of elaborate outline. On the fall front of the writing compartment with moulded edge is another fanciful panel. The section above, crowned with a highly curved and heavily moulded form, decorated with a carved and gilded shell and swags, is spaced into numer-



FIG. 237. ARM CHAIR PAINTED GREEN.
VENETIAN, ABOUT 1760
FROM THE SALVADORI COLLECTION,
VENICE



FIG. 238. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. EMILIA,
OR VENETIA, ABOUT 1760-70
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELKANOR
HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 239. WHITE AND GOLD SETTEE. LUCCA, ABOUT 1740-50
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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ous moulded drawers and a centre compartment with an arched door, all riotous in colour with paper decorations. On the inner side of the drop leaf is a curious document in the form of a letter laid diagonally on the surface.

In Figure 177 is a pair of curved front corner cabinets only partially ornamented in this style. The paper figures and landscape accessories are placed against painted backgrounds framed in elaborate forms, incised on grounds of gesso. The decorations of the curved legs and aprons are painted and the shelves at the top are marbled.

It must be remembered that by no means were all the important pieces of Italian furniture of this period painted or stuck over with pretty childish motifs as so many were at Venice, the city abandoned to gayety and sensuous revelry. Throughout Tuscany and the northern provinces of Italy there were many families passing their time in the dullest conservatism. In their more austere apartments furniture of similar form was found but with embellishments of marquetry or a simpler type of decoration. In these sections numerous *secrétaires* and commodes were found resembling those seen in Figures 179 and 180, Figure 179 being one of the richer types common to Tuscany and parts of Lombardy, with moulds applied in an unrestrained manner that was by no means uncommon. The bulging form is veneered with walnut, the front is spaced into three drawers, another be-



FIG. 240. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY,
ABOUT 1750-60
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

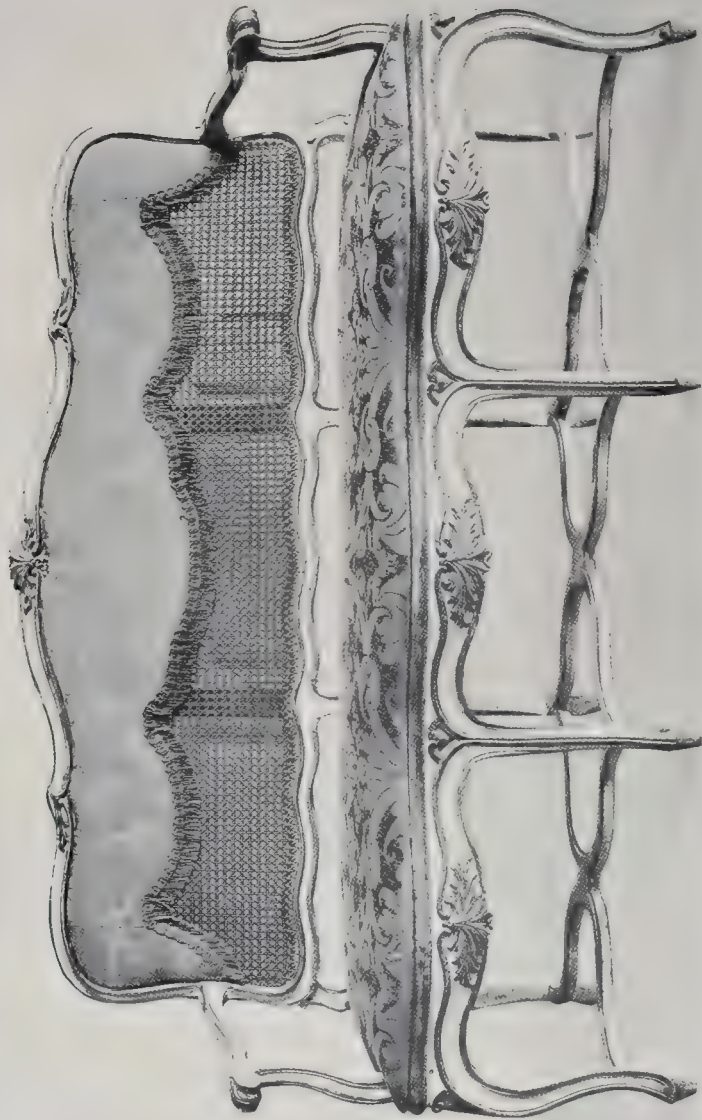


FIG. 241. WHITE AND GOLD SETTEE. ROME, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

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ing placed above the writing compartment. Figure 180 is the familiar high form with a lower body containing drawers and an upper section with double doors. It is profusely decorated with marquetry of abstract design and crowned with a broken pediment.

Beginning with the eighteenth century the console table became one of the chief articles of decorative furniture in the salon, drawing-room, and numerous galleries. Those from the Venetian, Genoese, and Roman palaces



FIG. 242. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. ROME, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

were among the most elaborate and marvellously sculptured articles of eighteenth century Italian furniture, often being a confused mass of rich gilding surmounted by handsome marble tops. The earliest of these, though based on the general plan of Louis XIV. design, are more massive in scale, the structure in the larger ones having three and sometimes four front supports with two or more back ones, braced with elaborate stretchers of

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FIG. 243. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. TUSCANY,
OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON,
NEW YORK CITY

detail and excellent technique, recall the work at Turin. In the elaborate octagonal rococo salon in the Pal. Soloro di Borgo, with its walls of mirrors and flower paintings panelled in delicate and riotous rococo frame-work, it would find a sympathetic environment.

A Roman table in this style coming from the Palazzo Spada is shown in Figure 187. It sums up an adequate example of late Roman Baroque as it was modified by the first phase of the French Rococo,

various forms in the manner of Figures 187 and 189. Essentially palace tables, created for specific positions in a grandly scaled and ornate interior, they are bound up with the merits and defects of their environment.

Figure 186 was for some years thought to be of French origin, yet its more freely drawn form combined in a less well-organized ensemble, together with its lighter



FIG. 244. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. EMILIA,
ABOUT 1740
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC.,
NEW YORK CITY

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which in Rome only found expression in a few magnificent palaces and some ecclesiastical work in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Though of Louis Quatorze structure, the flower swags, the dispersed shell treatment, and the drawing and attitude of the cupids may be somewhat misleading, suggesting a later attribution, yet if Filippo Passarini's work, "*Nuove Inventioni d'Ornamenti d'Architettura e d'Intaglio, etc.*," en-



FIG. 245. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. FLORENCE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

graved at Rome in 1698, is consulted, all these characteristics will be found expressed in an identical manner.

At Genoa the style was equally elaborate as well as concentrated, developing at an earlier date an expression more essentially French. The wealth of Genoa had greatly declined, yet, as Lady Mary Montague writes,

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FIG. 246. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. PIEDMONTE, ABOUT 1750-5
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

"Though the Republic is not rich, here are many private families vastly so and live at a great superfluous expense." Bearing witness to this fact are magnificent rococo apartments remaining in the palaces of the nobles, notably those of the Palazzo Rossa of which Figures 188 and 189 give a glimpse, the latter giving as well an idea of the part the console table and

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FIG. 247. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. VENICE,
ABOUT 1750
FROM THE COOPER MUSEUM OF THE ARTS OF DECORATION

great mirrors played in the decorative scheme of the Genoese palace. The table, one of the most ornate of those found only in the grand palaces, is a slight variation of the Roman example illustrated in Figure 187. It shows, however, how Genoese work was generally marked by a more vigorous detail, often confusing the structural lines.

Figure 190 is a representative example of the simpler palace tables adapted from the style of Louis XIV. Dating within a few years of 1700 it adequately illustrates how Baroque motifs were retained and combined with French design in much of the earlier work. The structural plan with square tapering legs and diagonal stretchers is frankly French, while the ornament of the legs, though derived from the same source, is freely handled. The cartouche and scrolls of the apron and the scrolls and leaves of the stretchers are Baroque motifs only slightly modified.

One of the finest specimens of the later type showing the full development of the rococo table, dating just before the middle of the century, is shown in Figure 196. This is Venetian work of the highest quality; the



FIG. 248. WHITE AND GOLD CHAISE LONGUE.
PIEMONTE, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

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carving is of excellent execution and it fortunately retains its original gilding of superb tone. The Italians excelled in the beauty of their gilding, the gesso ground on which it was prepared imparting to it a soft and beautiful tone. In reproduction, however, this is less obvious than the highly characteristic Italian drawing of the style. As in practically all the larger and more important console tables, the design is more vigorous and the proportions larger than in contemporary French work. In general the Italian salons and state apartments were on a much grander



FIG. 249. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, OR VENETIA, ABOUT 1750
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN



FIG. 250. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. VENETIA, ABOUT 1740-50
COURTESY OF LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

scale than those of the French, necessitating a bolder conception in order to vie with the other details of the ensemble. It must also be remembered that in Italian houses as in many English ones there was an aggregation of several centuries. Beneath magnificent Renaissance ceilings were to be found rococo and pseudo-classic walls, while against tapestried and frescoed elevations of the sixteenth century rococo furniture was placed, often successfully blending with them. The figure illustrated represents the height of the Rococo, yet its lion feet and the for-

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FIG. 251. RED AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
TUSCANY, ABOUT 1740-50
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

decorations, the scrolls being brought out in hues of darker green; the flowers and the broken shell are painted Venetian red, while the top, of black marble veined with gold, adds much to the richness of the whole.

From the little republican oligarchy of Lucca comes a considerable quantity of Italian rococo furniture reflecting the taste of its commercial wealth. The principal families kept up their enterprises until the close of the eighteenth century, some being bankers, others in possession of silk

mation of the scroll legs betray the influence of the great decorative centuries of the past, the sixteenth and seventeenth respectively. The top is of Siena marble.

Of the painted type, Figure 201 is perhaps one of the finest Venetian tables of the style that followed, beginning about the mid-century, and growing constantly lighter, more graceful, and more richly coloured. In line, form, and colour it represents the climax of that superbly sensuous phase of Venetian decorative art. A light tone of greenish gold paint forms the background for both carved and painted



FIG. 252. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. VENICE,
ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF SIG. ANTONIO SALVADORI, VENICE

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FIG. 253. PAINTED ARM CHAIR. VENICE,
ABOUT 1720-30
COURTESY OF SIG. ANTONIO SALVADORI, VENICE

manufactories and other industries. Much of the furniture of this period is brightly painted in hues of green and blue often combined with gold; white and cream was also used. Carving, which seemed to be preferred to painted designs, was profuse but lacked in most instances the finer organization of the Venetian pieces as is shown in Figure 207.

Returning to the subject of Venetian furniture there is still another phase of the eighteenth century that is of considerable importance—the use of the human figure in the decoration of furniture. This taste was by no means new to the Venetians for in the seventeenth century it had reached an exaggerated stage. The critical de Brosse wrote in 1739 of the Palace of the Foscari, at Venice: “There are not less than two hundred apartments, all full of rich furnishings. There is not a single cabinet one can use nor an easy chair where one can sit, on account of the delicacy of the sculpture.” While often of excellent modelling, delicacy or restraint are not qualities that can be ascribed to much of the carved figure work of the eighteenth century. Prominent in the furniture of the great palaces, as in the painted decorations and stucco work of the walls and more especially that of the ceiling, are the ornamental putti. Besides sporting in frescoed skies, crowding over architraves of doors, they support tables in the manner illustrated in Figure 194. This is one of a pair, entirely gilded and with red-brown marble tops.

Mirrors were numerous and of an infinite variety. Since the middle

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FIG. 254. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. VENICE,
ABOUT 1720-30
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. CHARLES HUNTER, EPPING, ENGLAND



FIG. 255. VERMILION LACQUER SIDE
CHAIR. VENICE, ABOUT 1710-20
COURTESY OF SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

of the seventeenth century they had been prominent interior features, but in this period they were even more conspicuous; they were placed over mantels, over console tables, they formed the background for sconces; they were etched, painted, and framed in an inconceivable number of ways and are among some of the most successful, as well as the most debased, designs of the period. In addition to the magnificent console mirrors made for the palaces there were many smaller and simpler ones in the style of Figure 202. This is one of the lighter, freely treated rococo designs, entirely gilded, that were used as console mirrors in the prettily

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furnished little houses in the vicinity of Modena, Parma, and Cremona. Another tall, vertical form, carved and gilded, that was used over a mantel in a smaller Venetian apartment is illustrated in Figure 204. Figure 203 is one of the horizontal varieties of over-mantel mirrors freely



FIG. 256. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. BOLOGNA, ABOUT 1750

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

FIG. 257. GILT AND PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. ROME, ABOUT 1750

COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

treated in the rococo style. The frame, painted in cream and blue green, has amongst its riotous forms numerous little brackets designed to display trifles of glass and porcelain.

In addition to the great chandeliers of crystal, carved wood, and wrought iron, numerous appliques and sconces added to the illumination of the interiors. In nearly every well-furnished room, as may be seen in old engravings, were to be found a series of mirrored sconces. This fashion which was established at Venice in the second half of the

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seventeenth century had by now reached its highest state of development, resulting in the production of no end of sconces of varied conception. In Figure 191 two dating from the early eighteenth century are illustrated showing the Louis XIV. style combined with the Venetian



FIG. 258. PAINTED AND GILDED SIDE CHAIRS. VENICE, ABOUT 1760
COURTESY OF LEONI RICCI, NEW YORK CITY

Baroque. Each one, part of a large set, is carved and entirely gilded. Though mirrors of this type were sometimes used merely as decorations, many more had holders for candles, as have these, springing from the mask heads carved at the bottom of each.

Figure 197 is a Venetian fantasy of etched glass with a frame and candle holders of gilded metal. Small notes of colour are introduced into the forms of the top and bottom divisions, etched with a small diaper pattern. These are a deep brilliant blue, the rest being of natural colour.

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FIG. 259. CANOPY BED IN RED DAMASK. LOMBARDY, EARLY XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE VILLA OF COUNT ALFONSO VISCONTI, MILAN

A few chandeliers, appliques and candelabra were composed of wrought-iron flowers, like those illustrated in Figures 169 and 199. This fashion was especially characteristic of Venice whence come beautiful specimens composed of masses of flowers such as roses, carnations, and daisies painted in naturalistic and fantastic hues of many colours. Into these compositions were sometimes introduced little Dresden, Capo di Monte, and other porcelain figures, after the manner seen in Figure 169.

Far removed from Venetian splendour, Genoese sumptuosity and Roman pomposity, is a wealth of simpler furniture awakening a more general sympathy by its charm of simplicity. At Venice the patricians squandered their fortunes in the maintenance of frivolous luxuries, while the bourgeoisie lived in conservative indifference; therefore it is to Venice we look for the supreme artistic achievements in the richest work of the period, the exception being offered by the few less splendid pieces coming from the country houses of the nobility. At Genoa the state

ITALIAN FURNITURE

of things was somewhat similar, wealth being even more closely concentrated on a few noble families who lived in a formal and sumptuous rococo environment. But at Rome and Naples the contrast was greatest—profligate and ostentatious living or the most degraded poverty. Therefore it is in democratic Tuscany and Lucca, where the living conditions of the middle classes were in a higher state of development; in the houses of



FIG. 260. CANOPY BED. LOMBARDY, FIRST HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

FROM THE VILLA OF COUNT ALFONSO VISCONTI, MILAN

petty nobles in the smaller provinces of Modena and Parma, where cognizance was taken of the new fashions; at Milan where a merchant and middle class were becoming more comfortable and even powerful, and in the smaller and more prosperous towns of Brescia, Bergamo, and Leghorn, we look for the best of the less pretentious furniture of the Rococo period.

The drawing-rooms of the upper middle classes in and north of Tuscany were generally severe and at times almost bare. From these rooms

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FIG. 261. CARVED AND PAINTED MIRROR FRAME. VENICE,
ABOUT 1750
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

and from those of the mezzanine of the greater palaces comes practically all of the simple furniture that is gaining the approval of discriminating taste. Walnut was generally used in the construction of these, though some few pieces were painted in tones of white, green, blue and yellow, these being as a rule without painted decorations. The farther north the province the closer these examples resemble the furniture of southern France, especially that found in the houses of Bergamo, Brescia, Ve-

rona, Vicenza, and parts of Piedmonte and Liguria. This is illustrated by the carved walnut centre table and the wall table seen in Figures 210 and 212, both having the appearance of provincial French furniture. Figure 210, an example of unusual grace, has cabriole legs with carved shoulders, a curved apron with rococo motifs, and bulging ends containing a drawer. Figure 212, of slightly cruder texture, exhibits a similar grace in its lines. The front of the top is slightly serpentine and the sides are curved as well, while the front apron contains a drawer. In addition to these were to be found smaller tables of the simplest craftsmanship but of designs displaying uncommon

ITALIAN FURNITURE

grace of line based upon recognized French forms, such as the little walnut table illustrated in Figure 211.

The preponderance of elaborate chairs throughout the first two dec-

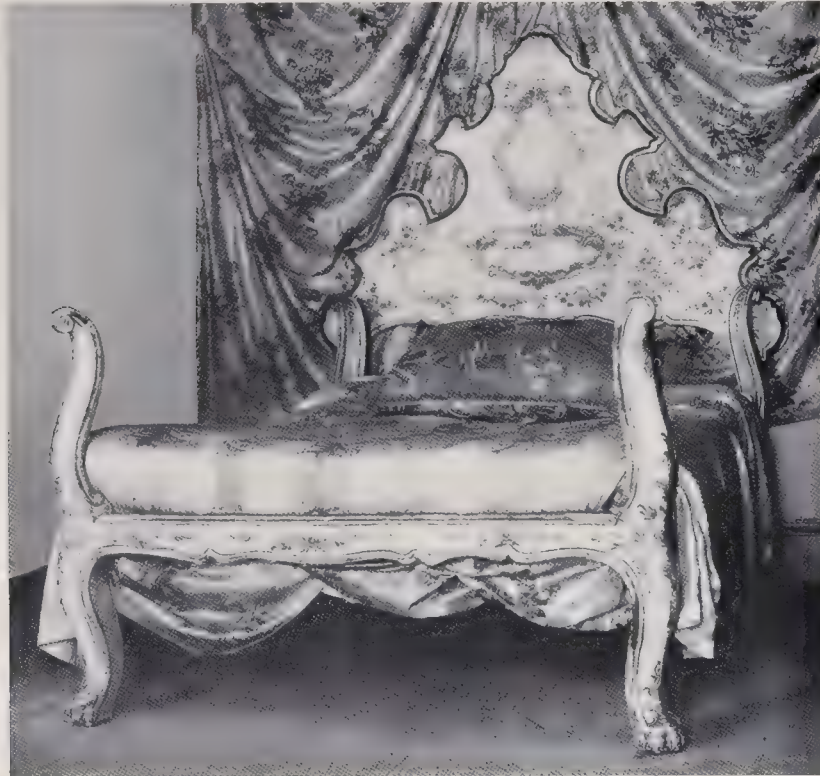


FIG. 262. PAINTED BED. VENETIA, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1740
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

ades of the century resembled the ornately carved and gilded models, showing debased conceptions of Louis XIV. design combined with the Baroque in the manner of the arm chairs from the Museo d' Antichità at Parma, illustrated in Figure 93. However, a few contemporary with these, and the majority of those in the two decades following were fashioned in the simpler and more successful style of Figures 215, 216, and

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217, all with well-developed cabriole legs, well scaled and organized ornamentation and high, shaped backs completely covered with upholstery. Figure 215, a Venetian model of a scale adequate to be placed against the magnificent elevations of a state apartment, is richly carved with motifs derived from Louis XIV. design. Figures 215 and 217 are types of the side chair that accompanied these great arm chairs. The first named is of the highest order, being beautifully proportioned, consistently ornamented, and entirely gilded, while the last mentioned, equally successful, is painted green with carved decorations of gold.

A highly characteristic chair of the period is illustrated in Figure 219. Here the English feeling, which had been thoroughly individualized by the Italian craftsmen, predominates, the modelling of the cabriole leg, noticeably the shoulder, and the way it is joined to the seat rails, recalling many earlier Georgian designs. The Italian character, however, asserts itself in the general proportions, the height of the seat, the form of the back, and the relation of part to part. The vigorous modelling of the arm alone would be enough to identify the origin of this excellently designed chair. Covering the back and seat is a Venetian brocade of many rich colours which, in combination with the carved and gilded frame, produces a familiar Italian scheme.

There is also the typical rococo chair illustrated in Figure 224. The scale of the whole is characteristic of these earlier Louis XV. attempts, they being considerably higher in the seat and of correspondingly larger proportions than contemporary French models. Arms were higher and more often without upholstered pads; frames of the back were wider, heavier and more disturbed in line, at times giving the chair an extremely top-heavy appearance. The seat aprons were also heavier and more profusely carved. This type was often gilded, some few were painted, while some were of walnut. Seats and backs were rather flatly upholstered and generally covered with brocades, velvets, and damasks.

It was not until about the middle of the century that Italian designers began to copy French rococo chairs with any degree of understanding, yet



FIG. 263. PAINTED BED. VENICE, ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE COOPER MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE ART, NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

the work of this period even at its best shows striking Italian peculiarities, as indicated in Figures 225 and 226. Both are from the north, Lombardy, Piemonte, or Venice, as it was in these parts that the style was first assimilated. Figure 225 displays the Italian tendency toward more exaggerated curves in the cabriole leg and a profuse use of carved ornament, while the heavier and wider frame of the back, preferred by Italian designers, is nicely portrayed in each. The framework of both is entirely gilded.

Figures 227 and 228 are somewhat later, the first named, which is painted, being practically a copy of the conventional Louis XV. chair just before it gave way to the Louis XVI. style. Figure 228, contemporary with it, is a representative Italian type, summarized by the higher seat, the peculiar outline of the seat rail, and the form and scale of the back as well as its flat upholstery.

The canné chairs of this period are numerous. These, as Figure 246 proves, follow more closely the Louis XV. designs from which they are derived, and occasionally as in this example, have the grace and refinement of the best French work. This chair was found in Milan, but may have come from one of the palaces at Turin where furniture of the kind was found in greater quantities. It retains a thin and much worn coat of gold-coloured paint. The seat was originally with a loose pad, the arms being raised on bases so as not to interrupt the curve.

The arm chair and settee, with caned backs and seats, illustrated in Figures 241 and 242, are part of a large set coming from one of the salons of a Roman palace, where chairs and settees in the Louis XV. style were quite late in developing a drawing as correct as this. In spite of the fact that diagonal curvilinear stretchers of the Regency have been retained, the simplified lines of the later Louis XV. phase suggest this to be work of the second half of the century. Roman individuality asserts itself in the carved foliated motifs of Baroque scale on the curved seat rails and back, while the colour scheme, white and gold, was preponderant both at Rome and Naples. The upholstery is not original.

Splat back chairs are often a combination of English and French forms.

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Some of the painted ones, resembling Queen Anne or early Georgian models, are found among Venetian chairs of the earlier part of the century, as is illustrated in Figure 256 with flowers and figures in the Chinese taste and in Figure 257, of yellow-red with gold decoration emphasizing its



FIG. 264. PAINTED CRADLE. VENICE, ABOUT 1750
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

Venetian character. Those seen in Figure 258 have a more decided French feeling. They are enriched with painting as well as carving. The background is of green, the carved ornament and moulds are gilded, while the figures and floral motifs are in naturalistic colours. The seats were originally upholstered in yellow damask.



FIG. 265. BED WITH NEEDLE-WORK HANGINGS. FLORENCE, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE PALAZZO CORSINI, FLORENCE

CHAPTER III
THE CLASSIC REVIVAL
THE SECOND HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY



AFTER having been for the first half of the eighteenth century a battlefield on which the most important European wars were fought, Italy became in the remaining peaceful years of the century prior to the French Revolution, the scene of arduous archaeological research and study, that was not only to form the basis for a new phase of Italian decorative art, but was to make Italy once more the emanating centre of a new European expression—the pseudo-classicism of the eighteenth century. As early as the year 1738, while the riotous Rococo style was at its height, Charles III. ordered regular excavations to be made at Pompeii. Herculaneum had, however, been accidentally discovered some years before when a few hasty and damaging excavations revealed fragments of classical architecture and sculpture. Following these events in close succession, about the middle of the century came the uncovering of the paintings in the baths of Titus, the remains of Hadrian's Villa, and the rediscovery of the classic ruins of Paestum.

Classical research and study became the absorbing interest of the day. Winckelmann, the pioneer of historic and scientific archaeology, who came to Rome in 1755, began his enormous labours assisted by Italian and European disciples, awakening throughout Italy a new interest in the collecting and study of antique art. At Naples there was the "Ercolana," the business of its members being, as Baretti informs us, "to explain as well as they could the pictures, statues, inscriptions, and other such curiosities dug out of Herculaneum," while at a little town of no more importance than Cortona there was the "Accademia Etrusca" for the illustration of the



FIG. 266. BLUE AND GOLD BED. VENICE, ABOUT 1780
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

Etruscan antiquities discovered in Tuscany. Monumental works illustrated by such masters as Piranesi, Bartolozzi, and others of less renown were also the outcome. They soon spread the fame of the classic monuments to all parts of the civilized world and established a new standard which gave



FIG. 267. PAINTED BED WITH DECORATIONS OF GOLD. TURIN, ABOUT 1785-90
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

fresh impetus to all expressions of European art. Jean Demosthene Dugourc, one of the greatest factors in the French pseudo-classic reaction known as the style of Louis Seize, received his inspiration directly from the Roman cult, especially through Winckelmann himself.

The revival of interest in classicism not only changed vastly the aspect of Italian decorative work, but gave, to some extent, support to new ideas in French philosophy, politics, and economy which, a few years later, began to penetrate into Italy together with recent forms of French art. For, as Mariotti says, "After the cessation of hostilities in 1748, Italy was governed by monarchs who aspired to the glory of reformers and legislators.

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The progress and diffusion of knowledge had broken the sceptre of religious tyranny, and declared war to that fanaticism which in Italy had never been a natural growth." During this long reign of peace the condition of the middle and lower classes gradually improved, the southern states were

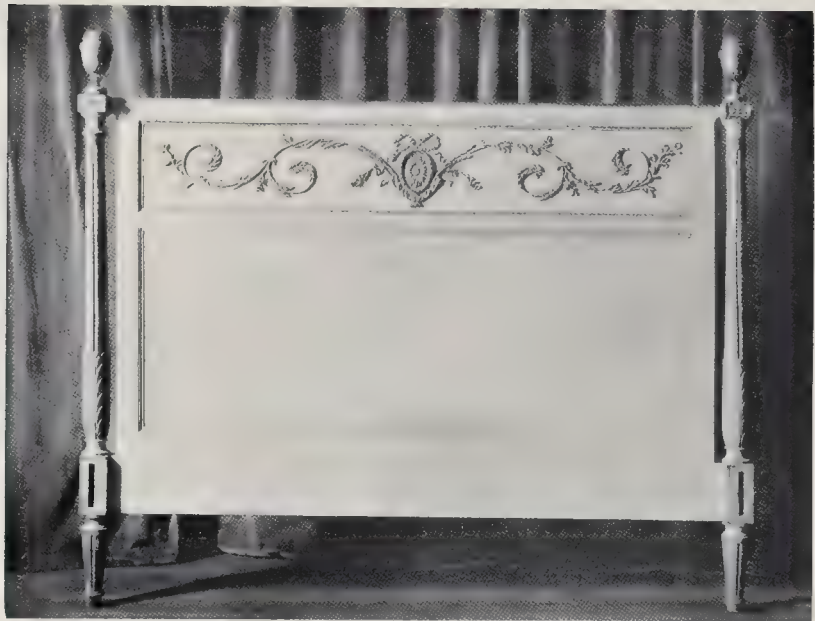


FIG. 268. CARVED AND PAINTED BED. VENICE, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1790
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

still a paradise for the noblesse and clergy but in the north, with its developed commerce and industries, there was a distinct advance toward a better state of things. Here, as the bourgeoisie increased in number and wealth, they began to give voice to their discontent with the social order.

But discontent was by no means prevalent; instead, society, whose aim was still amusement, seemed perfectly satisfied so long as the governments provided a gay court, an opera house and frequent entertainments. The efforts of a few well-meaning reformers, like Leopold of Tuscany, were even considered "tiresome interferences with a best of all possible worlds."

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And what matter to these little Arcadian puppets, absorbed in verse, melodies and comedies, "bowing and courtesying in a kind of perpetual minuet," if Italy was in the last stages of poverty? There were, after all, enough resources left to provide new fortunes for papal families, to support the

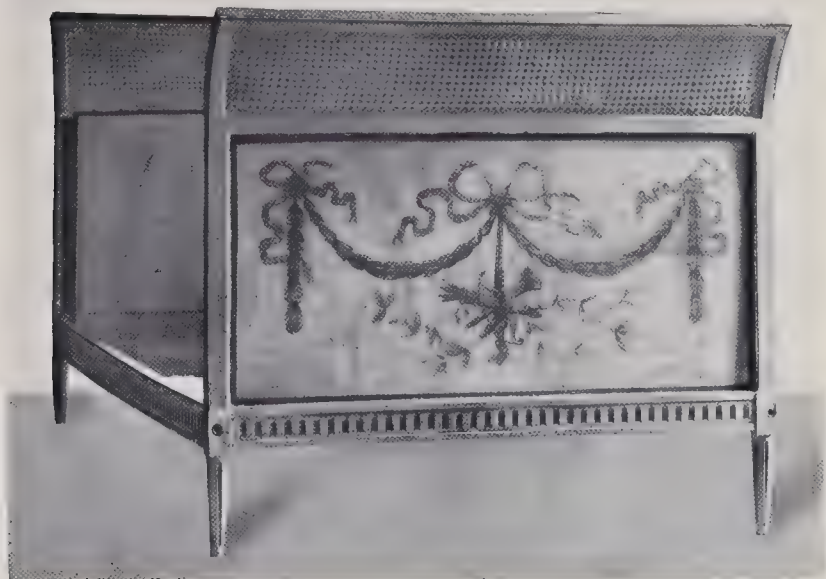


FIG. 269. PAINTED BED. EMILIA, OR VENETIA, ABOUT 1775-85
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. EDITH PARSONS MORGAN, NEW YORK CITY

fêtes, social entertainments, and the many extravagances of the Venetian aristocracy, and to supply the court at Turin with sufficient to maintain its gorgeous little army and fashions imitative of Versailles. It was only a few of the more thoughtful minds at Naples and Milan that accepted with any degree of enthusiasm the French theories.

Venice, one of the few Italian cities that could boast of being her own mistress, was still the city of fashion and frivolity. Under no foreign restraint, she gaily fêted herself to disaster with wealth amassed by her patricians in the days of her commercial supremacy. It has been said that "in no capital

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in the world was society more polished, foolish, elegant, spendthrift, and entertaining than at Venice," and this very excess of frivolity with a demand for new sensations and fashions no doubt encouraged the reaction which indirectly induced the wealthy and cultivated to form collections of antique art and to lend their patronage to the classic revival. Yet classic art was



FIG. 270. PAINTED SCREEN. EMILIA, OR VENETIA, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

taken no more seriously than were the complex theories of Diderot and Helvetius which were discussed in salons amidst cards, flirtations, and chatter. Still insatiable in the desire for new fashions, Venice frivolously and charmingly patterned her painted furniture and the decoration of her interiors after the Louis Sieze style in France, modifying them by her own desire for sensuous colour, while blending antique ideas with classically tempered motifs retained from her graceful Rococo style.

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"People who have not known the life of the ten years preceding the revolution have never tasted the joy of living," said Talleyrand. It was at Venice that this joy ran unconfined. Venetians, children of their own fancies,



FIG. 271. WALNUT BED. LOMBARDY, OR EMILIA, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

made the gratifying of their whims in the quest for pleasure a supreme philosophy. Industries may have been abandoned but "there were seven theatres, two hundred cafés always open, and an infinite number of casini which lit up at two o'clock in the morning and were frequented by lords and ladies

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FIG. 272. CANOPY OF FIG. 273

of the highest nobility mingled with a crowd of nobodies. Carved panels, white mouldings, gilt foliage, silver candlesticks, card-tables, fine marble, lace, flowers, such was the framework of this fair world."

As Venice was the city of fashion, so Rome was the centre of archaeological activities, the rendezvous of that crowd of disciples who spread the new classicism to all parts of the cultured world. Cardinal Albani, an archaeologist himself, who formed the priceless collection of antiques in the beautiful Villa Albani, brought to Rome Winckelmann, "the High Priest of Noble sim-

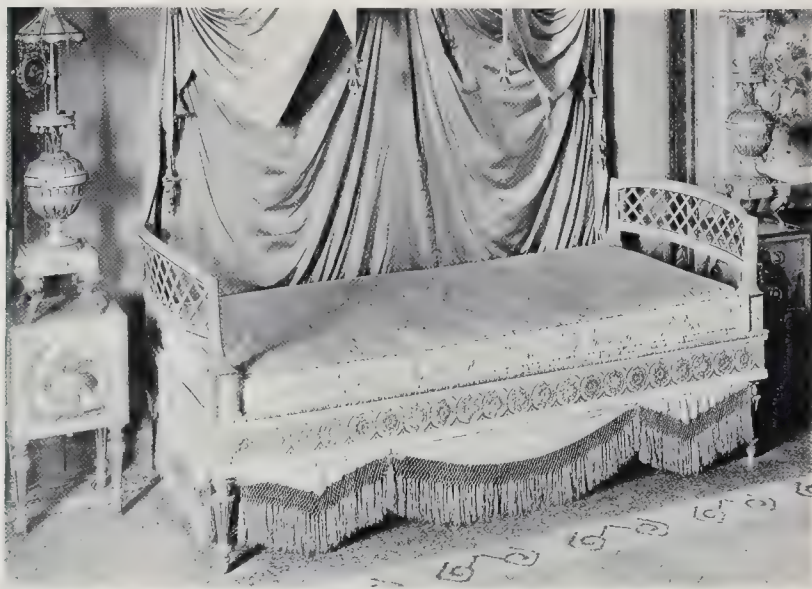


FIG. 273. PAINTED BED. VENICE, ABOUT 1780
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

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plicity and calm grandeur." Piranesi, "Poet Laureate of the Classic ruins," was attracted from Venice; here also was the eclectic Raphael Mengs, directing the Vatican School of painting, where Angelica Kauffman studied. The French architects of the day, together with those of England accompanied by her distinguished amateurs, all came to form their

style and gain new inspiration. Robert and James Adam were there and drew from this illustrious company Cipriani, Pergolesi, and Zucchi, as well as Piranesi, who assisted them with designs for furniture and the decoration of houses.

Of these Piranesi was the greatest factor in forming the style of the decorative arts of Italy, and he has been accredited recently with the part he played in influencing the styles of England, France, and Austria. Born in Venice, the most agreeable of all baroque and rococo cities, he began his artistic career at a period when the reposeful effect of classic

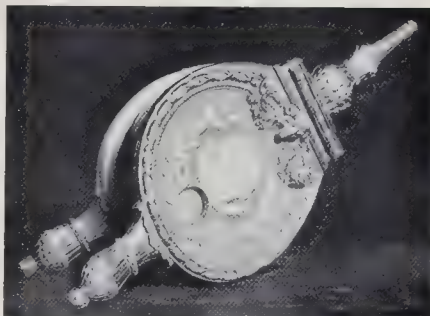


FIG. 274. CARVED WOOD BELLOWS. ROME,
ABOUT 1780-90
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE



FIG. 275. INTERIOR OF VENETIAN BOUDOIR, ABOUT 1780

sculpture failed to make any impression, or to obtain any recognition from the bizarre geniuses of that restless age when the most beautiful and famous of the classic monuments were regarded merely as "interesting old ruins." As has been said, "He started by ennobling and ended by compelling the

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world to use the epic grandeur of these monuments as ideals for work that was, in course of time, to adorn the avenues and thoroughfares of the capitals of the civilized world." Piranesi's earliest publication appeared in 1741. His larger and more important work, "Antichità Romane de' Tempi



FIG. 276. PAINTED COMMODO. VENETIAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

della Repubblica e de' primi Imperatori," was first published at Rome in 1748. He also made many plates for the book of Robert Adam and his brother, containing designs for architecture, furniture, and interior decorations. His most important contribution to furniture and decoration is the "Diverse Maniere," published in 1769. This work, filled with innumerable engravings of chimney-pieces, wall decorations, and ornamental objects, each crowded with motifs, lacking in restraint but overflowing with the imagination of this prolific genius, became an inexhaustible source of inspiration

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for the decorator and furniture designer. It was on this work that Mr. R. Phené Spiers claims the Empire style was based at a much later date.

In addition to these and other well-known works with which every student of art is familiar to-day, there appeared numerous treatises and appreciations now obscure. Pompous volumes were produced on a disputed



FIG. 277. PAINTED COMMUNE. FLORENCE, ABOUT 1770-80
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. BARLOW CULLUM, SEWICKLEY, PA.

bas-relief, fifty folio pages of the closest print were given to an ancient lamp by Liceti, while a scholar like Martorilli wrote two large quartos in explanation of an antique ink-stand. This prodigious output was one of the greatest factors for propaganda throughout Europe, especially in France where the critical writings of Winckelmann and Lessing had already been translated into the French. French publications on the antiques began to appear, including those famous issues Dandré Bardon's "Ancient Costume," Cochin's and Souffat's measured drawings of Paestum, and Le Roy's works on Greece.

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The pontificate of Benedict XIV. (1740-58) was most favourable to the new learning. Benedict, a philosopher himself, friend of Voltaire, Hume, and Muratori, and praised by Horace Walpole, no doubt encouraged classic research and the appearance, at least, of a more intellectual society at Rome.

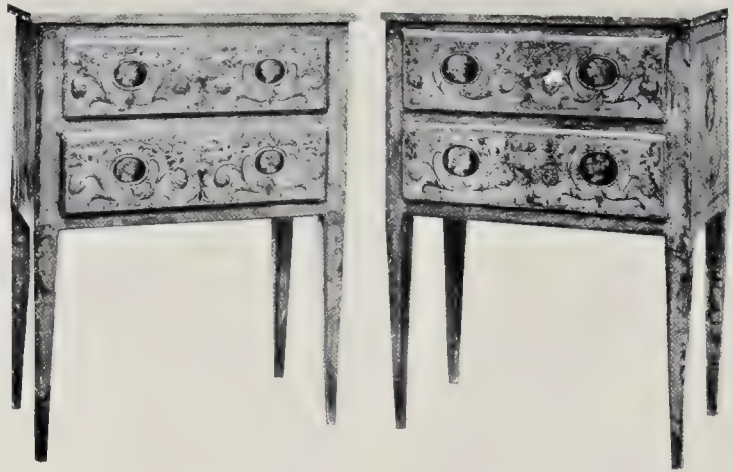


FIG. 278. PAINTED COMMODES. VENETIA, ABOUT 1790-1800
COURTESY OF LEONE RICCI, NEW YORK CITY

Antique cults soon became the fashion; princes made magnificent collections of antique art and "Music, cards, Piranesi, and art chatter provided an entertainment increasingly acceptable to the Roman nobility."

Roman society was very gay about 1774. Silvagni says before the troubles arising out of the French Revolution made Rome an unpleasant abiding place it was a residence of many of the great and gay of Europe, kings and princes included. The city was so filled with distinguished guests who were constantly fêted, that during the years of the pontificate of Pius VI. Rome was in a state of perpetual carnival. "Sumptuous feasts and banquets were given in the Colonna, Doria, Rezzonico, Corsini, Braschi, and Fiano palaces; but they were all eclipsed in grandeur by the entertainments of Cardinal de Bernis, who, as French ambassador, inhabited a splendid mansion, and exceeded all the other nobles in luxury and extravagance." Eng-

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land was represented by the exiled Stuarts who made it their permanent residence; the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland were also there between 1783 and 1786. The daughters of Louis XV., the Princesses Victoria and Adelaide, were added to the ranks in the latter part of the century, and the



FIG. 279. PAINTED COMMODE. VENETIA, ABOUT 1790-1800
COURTESY OF LEONE RICCI, NEW YORK CITY

Princesses Doria and Colonna were recruited from the royal house of Savoy, while the four beautiful Saxon princesses were becoming notorious for their extravagance and vanity.

In direct contrast were the Roman lower classes who remained degraded and ignorant. The church being the great land-owner, it was almost impossible to acquire a farm or rent landed property, so the masses eked out a squalid and miserable existence in lofty tenements that often rose side by side with magnificent palaces and churches. Though these had been built in the opulent age of pomp by the nobles and high ecclesiastics to accommodate their dependents, retainers, and servants, they had, by this time, degenerated into the most unlivable of hovels. This, and the fact that there

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was a very small respectable middle class, rarely owning property, accounts for the existence of so little furniture of this period of any importance excepting the sumptuous palace furnishings and the few simpler pieces coming from the more modest villas.

The church still played the prominent part in Roman social life, yet it, like the society, was generally corrupt. It has been said that as the court at Paris prepared the way for the downfall of the monarchy so the vicious Curia inaugurated the destruction of the civil power of the church. Abuses of every kind flourished under nepotism and up to the very end of the century great papal houses arose. After 1775 the Braschi, nephews of Pius VI., were established and "dazzled all eyes by their magnificence." They became dukes, acquired enormous possessions, reared a great Roman palace and became the possessors of beautiful villas.



FIG. 280. PAINTED COMMODE. VENETIA, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1790
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME



FIG. 281. PAINTED COMMODES. VENICE, ABOUT 1780-90
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

Meanwhile Milan, earning for herself the name of "a nursing ground for the modern nations," became the first Italian city in wealth and population as well as progress. It was also the academic centre of the decorative arts, abounding in artisans and craftsmen. Learning flourished in the salons of the upper classes, where literary men and scientific

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scholars were received and the new theories freely discussed. It was at the beginning of the century when the city passed from Spanish to Austrian rule, after the establishment of Maria Theresa's position, that this epoch of intellectual and material regeneration was inaugurated, affecting practically all Lombardy. Taxes were more fairly distributed, privileges curtailed, inquisition and right



FIG. 282. PAINTED COMMODE. VENETIA, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1790
PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

of asylum abolished, streets improved, industry and agriculture promoted and encouraged. Though under foreign rule, the noblesse played an important part in the administration of public affairs. Among them were the Visconti, Trivulzio, Serbelloni, Castelbarco, Pallavicini, and Borromeo, who with many others had considerable fortunes and lived in splendour.

One of the considerable factors in the development of the so-called Italian Louis Seize style was the Academy at Milan, founded in 1775. One of its directors, Albertolli, the most famous master of the neo-classicists, did much to maintain its high standard and diffuse its influence. In the "New Guide," published just after its foundation, we find "an account of the number,

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the variety, and the merit of the different professors; the collection of models, of designs, of prints, and of books, which are there provided for the use of the students"; to which is added, "the methods of education there inculcated, to the great benefit of the nation (Lombardy), which has already, for some



FIG. 283. PAINTED COMMODE. ROMAN, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES OF ROME

time past, been imbued with a more refined taste and displayed a more extended cultivation."

Nowhere in Europe was evident a greater improvement in the condition of the middle and lower classes than here. An English woman writes from Milan in 1771, "We had the pleasure of seeing how extremely opulent the citizens and their families appear, even down to the lowest mechanics; though I cannot say I liked to see blacksmiths and shoemakers with gold

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and silver stuffs in waistcoats, long swords, and embroidered knots; taylors in brocade and fine laced ruffles, etc. This is carrying opulence into luxury; at the same time waving these ridiculous excesses, I was rejoiced to see



FIG. 284. PAINTED COMMODOE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

everybody appear rich and happy. The women are in general very handsome. The noblesse and great ladies dress in a more noble style than at Paris and have a very genteel air and manner; their clothes are of the richest materials; and better made than any I have yet seen in Italy."

Florence must have been appallingly dull. Very little more artistic significance can be attached to the arrival of the new Grand Duke, Peter

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 285. PAINTED CABINET. EMILIA, OR VENETIA, LAST
QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF PAUL CHALFIN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

In a town surrounded by fertile country, with universities, schools of painting and music, a larger upper middle class was to be expected, diffusing taste, comfort, and domestic order. Upon the whole the palaces in respect to architecture and furnishing were not so sumptuous as those of Genoa, many being in bad repair, yet some few were furnished in

Leopold, than to the régime of the ignorant and dull Lorrainers. But of the Emilian group, including Bologna, Parma, and Modena, Bologna was undoubtedly of some importance. Though the Bolognese nobility were not very rich, among the people in general was to be found a certain amount of domestic comfort.



FIG. 286. PAINTED CORNER CABINET. ROME, LATE
XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

magnificent taste and nearly all contained great collections of pictures. Modes and manners, however, were very French, "the women of fashion copy the French and are generally very fine in Lyons silks, furs, and diamonds; the men also dressed in the mode of that country. The amusements and recreations of fashion were chiefly the theatre, opera, and assemblies."

When Charles III. established the Bourbon monarchy at Naples in 1734 a new era may be said to have been inaugurated in which Naples

gained not only in social brilliancy but in beautiful buildings and a finer quality of decorative art. It was this great grandson of Louis XIV. who began the imposing theatre of San Carlo, the palace at Capo di Monte and



FIG. 287. PAINTED CORNER CABINET. ROMAN, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. THOMAS HASTINGS, NEW YORK CITY

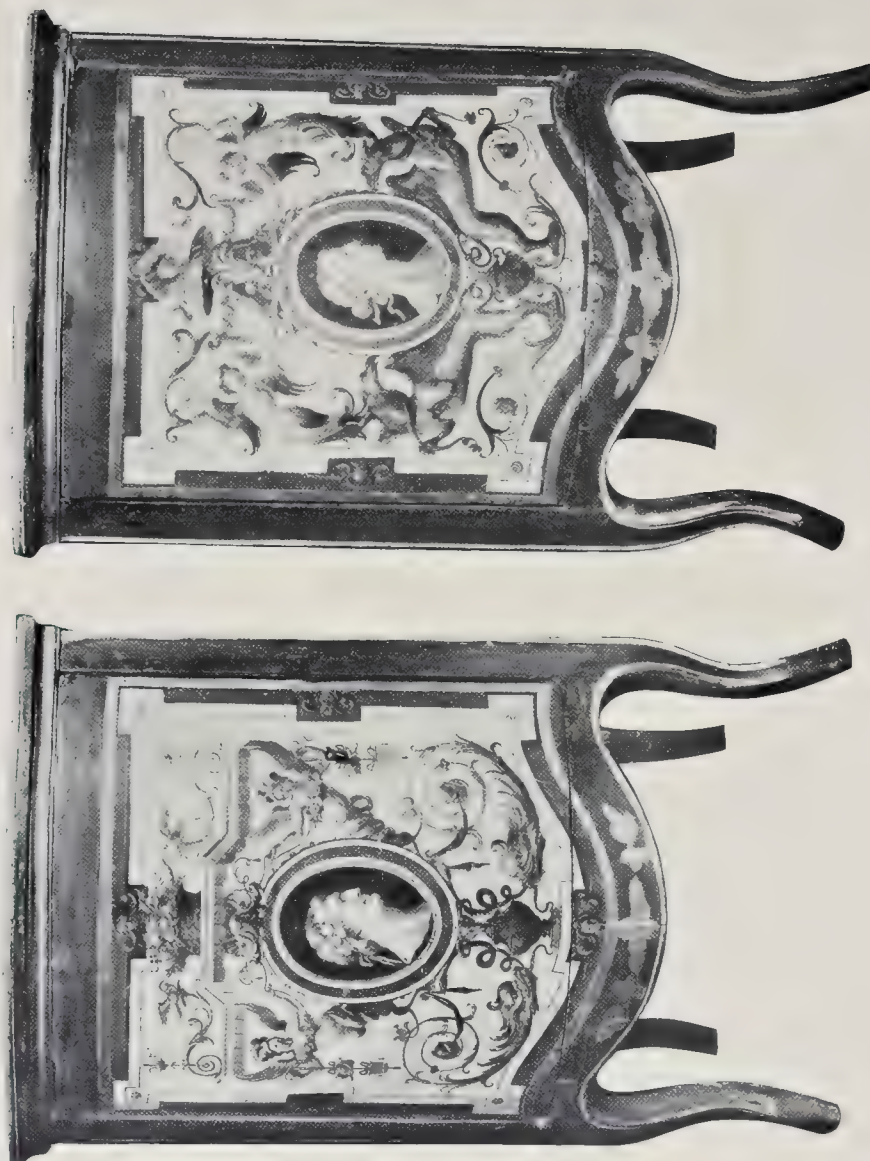


FIG. 288. PAINTED CORNER CABINETS. FLORENCE, ABOUT 1775
COURTESY OF CHARLES A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

that most ambitious of all eighteenth century Italian royal residences—the palace at Caserta. The reforms and general schemes of advancement that had been proposed had hardly begun to manifest themselves before Charles was called to the Spanish throne in 1759. His successor, Ferdinand I., who married Marie Caroline, one of the “weird sisters of Marie Theresa’s brood,” allowed the reins of government to be taken immediately from his hands by this Austrian princess. Inundating the court and state with foreigners, she defeated the attempts of the able minister Tannucci toward civil and ecclesiastical reforms, thereby

preventing any appreciable improvement in the condition of the wretched Neapolitan masses whom she is said to have detested.

The court, however, was bright with fashion as it was being portrayed at the court of the queen’s sister, Marie Antoinette of France. French was generally spoken; French literature was substituted for Italian, and foreign products, especially those of France, England, and Germany, were in excessive demand, wholly displacing those of native origin. Though the French influence was paramount the many English who resided at Naples at this time did not fail to make their impress upon style in furniture as well as fashion in dress and manners. They were extremely popular, Lord and Lady Hamilton being great favourites at the court. These combined



FIG. 289. GILDED BRONZE CANDELABRA. VENICE, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGIO GALLERIES OF ROME

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foreign influences altered appreciably the appearance of furniture and decoration in Neapolitan palaces during the latter part of the century just preceding the French Revolution, when Spanish grandeur had wholly given place to a more agreeable classic expression in which French and English



FIG. 290. MARQUETRY COMMUNE. LOMBARDY, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

styles were blended with Pompeian motifs in a manner sometimes quite charming.

Yet in this diverse assemblage the Neapolitan nobility were by no means to be disregarded, for they were as numerous as they were inordinate in their love of display. Nor was their vanity satisfied with the titles of count and marquis as in most parts of Italy; instead they assumed the rank of dukes and princes. John Moore tells us that the king (Ferdinand I.) counts one hundred persons with the title of prince and a still greater number with that of duke. "Six or seven of these had estates producing from ten

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to thirteen thousand pounds a year; a considerable number have fortunes of about half that value, while the annual revenue of many is not above one thousand or two thousand pounds." He further writes:

"When we consider the magnificence of their entertainments, the splen-



FIG. 291. MARQUETRY COMMUNE. LOMBARDY, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

dour of their equipages, and the number of their servants, we are surprised that the richest of them can support such expensive establishments. I dined, soon after our arrival, at the Prince of Cranca's villa; there were about forty people at table; it was a meagre day; the dinner consisted entirely of fish and vegetables and was the most magnificent entertainment I ever saw, comprehending an infinite variety of dishes, a vast profusion of fruit, and the wines of every country of Europe. I dined since at the Prince Iacci's. I shall mention two circumstances from which you may form an idea of the grandeur of an Italian palace, and the number of domestics

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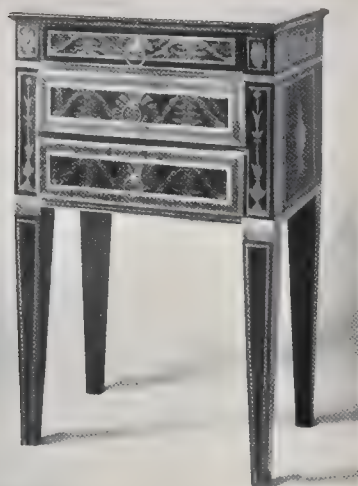


FIG. 292. MARQUETRY COMMODE. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1780-90
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR
BIWITT, NEW YORK CITY

which some of the nobility retain. We passed through twelve or thirteen large rooms before we arrived at the dining room; there were thirty-six persons at table, none served but the Prince's domestics, and each guest had a footman behind his chair; other domestics belonging to the Prince remained in the adjacent rooms and in the halls. No estate in England could support such a number of servants paid and fed as English servants are; but here the wages are very moderate indeed and the greater number of men servants, belonging to the finest families, give their attendance through the day only and find beds and provisions for themselves.

It must be remembered also that few nobles give entertainments and those who do not are said to live very sparingly; so that the whole of their revenue, whatever that may be, is exhausted in articles of show."

Throughout all these little Italian provinces, each with their foreign influences and native tendencies, the pseudo-classic style of the eighteenth century succeeded in manifesting itself in a greater or less degree, coloured in every case by the individuality of the state. From Milan to Naples, from Turin to Venice there was a wide range of varying expressions each with its characteristic charm and defect. Yet as a whole, the style in Italy, as in France, may be divided into two distinct phases, each drawing its inspiration from a different source.

In France, beginning with the work of Jaques Gabriel, architecture and the allied arts returned again to the traditions of the Renaissance, there being little indication of any source other than that from which the styles

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of the French Renaissance and that of Louis XIV. were formed. Just after the middle of the century, when the restless Rococo began to pall, the propaganda

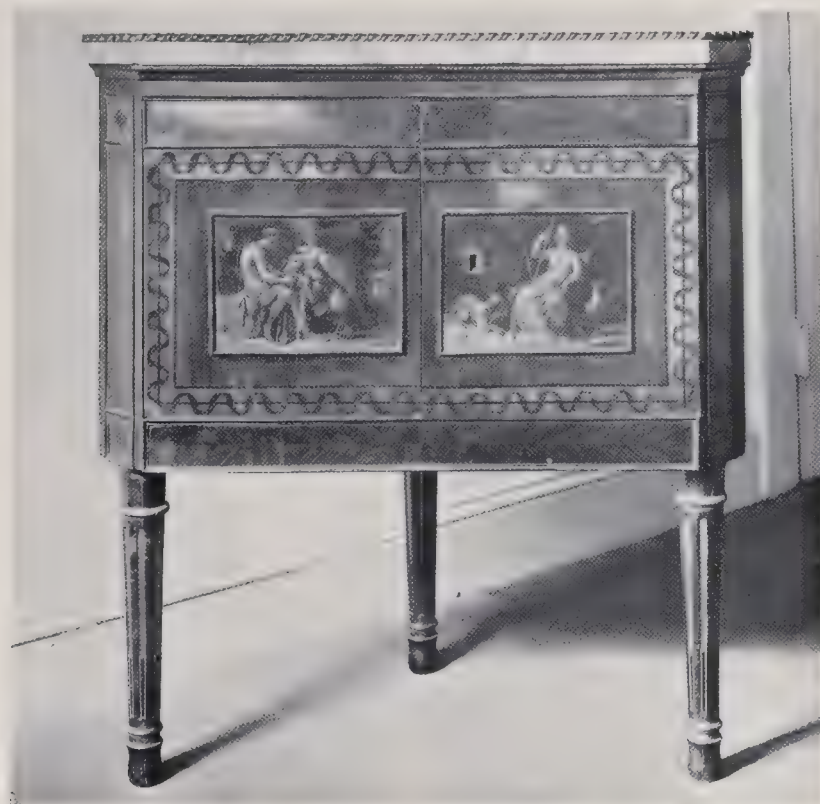


FIG. 293. CORNER CABINET WITH MARQUETRY AND PAINTED DECORATIONS. FLORENCE,
LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MISS GHEEN, INC., NEW YORK CITY

of the archaeologists working in Italy reached France and gave considerable stimulus to the reactionary style. With the tendency toward greater privacy and delicacy in fashions, and the interest in nature aroused by Rousseau, the early phase of the French revival resulted largely in a Louis XIV-Palladian architectural background diminished in scale, on which pseudo-classic, naturalistic, and sentimental motifs were substituted for the aggressive Baroque.

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In Italy the contemporary style was largely a copy or interpretation of this, mingling with the Italian Rococo, not wholly freed from the spirit of the Baroque. For notwithstanding the fact that the classical revival was started at Rome and Naples, it did not become popular in Italy during the



FIG. 294. MARQUETRY COMMODE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

first period of the style until it had been filtered through France. Yet in spite of this strong French domination, Italian design, especially that of furniture, though invariably inferior in craftsmanship and materials, still retained that striking individuality which, as a recent critic has said, "has not that coldness and bloodlessness that often render the Adam style insipid and that of Louis Seize too correct, finished and lacking in imagination." This is the period that may be called the "Italian Louis Seize," less prolific in expression than that of the later Italian Pseudo-Classic style or the Rococo.

Both the French and Italian manifestations in their second phase drew inspiration from the classic fountain head. Instead of being derived from

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the antique as it was interpreted by the Renaissance, there was a direct return to the classical source. To this source had been added Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Greece, while the Roman antique had been somewhat illuminated by the investigations and theories of Winckelmann and his fol-



FIG. 295. COMMODE WITH MARQUETRY DECORATIONS. TUSCANY, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1780
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

lowers. In decoration this introduced a decidedly novel note—an expression in which new motifs and a different arrangement appear. While in France the traditions of the Renaissance were still dominant, they became more and more submerged in the accumulation of new material which gradually took another form, ultimately triumphing in the Empire style. In France the beginning of the movement is clearly seen in the decoration done by Rousseau for the apartments of Marie Antoinette at Fontainebleau and those in the Salon à Coupole at Bagatelle, designed by Dugourc about 1780.

Both of these masters were studying in Italy at the time the Italians began to formulate their more original and national style. From the years

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FIG. 296. SECRÉTAIRE. FLORENCE, ABOUT 1780
FROM THE SALVADORI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

1770 to 1790 Italy seemed to be enjoying the fruits of some years of peace; it was a melodious, happy land, no doubt, far more Arcadian than some of our historians would have us believe. The Rococo style did not sweep Italy off her feet as it did France; she had long been entertained by the Baroque—its antecedent—and was now too engrossed in music, the opera, and the comedies of Goldoni and Gozzi. The Italians were, however, ready

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FIG. 297. MARQUETRY CABINET. LOMBARDY, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

for a new decorative art to express recently adopted social customs. In Milan and all Lombardy, at Rome and Naples, the palaces began to be decorated in a new manner. In Rome and Naples it was confined to the palaces, while in Lombardy, with the advancing middle class and compara-

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tively rich bourgeoisie, the style was more generally diffused, after being formulated in the great Milanese palaces and Lombard villas. In Italy the work is characterized by an absence of many of the pretty French conceits, such as ribbon bow-knots, dainty flowers, and sentimental motifs, comprising



FIG. 298. CARVED WALNUT COMMODE. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1760-80
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

arrows, doves, etc., as well as those motifs Rousseau inspired through his regard for nature. Instead, the Pompeiian, Etruscan, and Roman fuses with the Raphaelesque arabesque of the Renaissance and the antique fantasies of Piranesi, in a manner that in design conception recalls the traditions of the Quattrocento and is not unjustly claimed by some enthusiasts for the style to be the most beautiful of Italian work since that epoch. Acknowledging the fact that imitation was rife as it always is when anything striking first comes into fashion and the fact that there is a vast output of tiresome, arid, and monotonous work, the finer decorative products of this period are

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full of creative charm, spontaneity, and substance, and are rapidly gaining the recognition they deserve.

In order to appreciate the furniture of this period it is necessary to have some idea of the architectural background of which it was often an integral part. The revival of interest in classic art was not long in tem-



FIG. 299. CARVED WALNUT COMMODE. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1775
THE PROPERTY OF HOWARD MAJOR, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

pering the unrestrained rococo forms of the interiors, gradually re-establishing symmetry, with the rectilinear and rectangular dominating. Classic cornices, friezes, and pilasters were again prominent, while pediments were less frequently broken and cornices rarely disturbed by cartouches. In consequence rococo ornament gave place to classic and naturalistic motifs combined with arabesques both ancient and Raphaelesque. Lighter and cooler colours such as tints of green, blue, and yellow combined with gold or contrasting colours were preferred. These were made still lighter and gayer with many mirrors and crystal chandeliers. Halls, vestibules, and ante-rooms were occasionally round or oval in plan, with niches, columns, or pilasters, marble mosaic floors and ancient sculpture.

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To an even greater extent was the design of furniture affected. As in the architectural background, sinuous rococo lines gave place to the curves of the circle, oval, and ellipse; structure was largely based on the rectilinear, while classic motifs were profusely used. Colour, though still prominent,



FIG. 300. MARQUETRY WRITING TABLE. NAPLES, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

was less heavy and sumptuous, harmonizing with the smaller furniture forms. There was a less frequent use of gilt, while all detail was more delicately expressed. In style, most of the important furniture was closely allied to its background, that of the salons, ballrooms, and halls often being ranged against the walls, as a part of the architectural scheme.

With this period the Italian boudoir arrived, affecting appreciably the furnishings of the bed-chamber. Though the great canopied bed was still in use, many more were of smaller form with panelled head and foot boards, often painted or carved with the new classic decorations. The great canopied beds were found only in the grand houses and in spite of the fact that eighteenth century travellers from more northern climes complained bitterly

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that beds were without curtains, they were not really suited to the climate of Italy where only a few months out of the year, in the northern part, would they be deemed necessary.

Still, in the town palaces magnificent examples such as the one illustrated in Figure 265 are to be found dating from this period. As this shows, they are sometimes of the same structure as those of the seventeenth century, but with simpler cornice, crowning ornaments and other details, and almost invariably without the gorgeously carved head-boards. These beds depend largely upon their hangings, valances, counterpanes, etc., for their decorative effect and though they were often as rich as those of the seventeenth century, they differed in colour and pattern. They were, during this period, hung in silk of lighter colours, also satins and painted materials, as well as a variety of needle-work of which the present illustration shows a most beautiful example. In spite of the fact that lighter and more delicate patterns as well as colours were fast coming into fashion these beds were still at times hung with the old-fashioned crimson damask and velvets, especially in the apartments of cardinals and nobles.

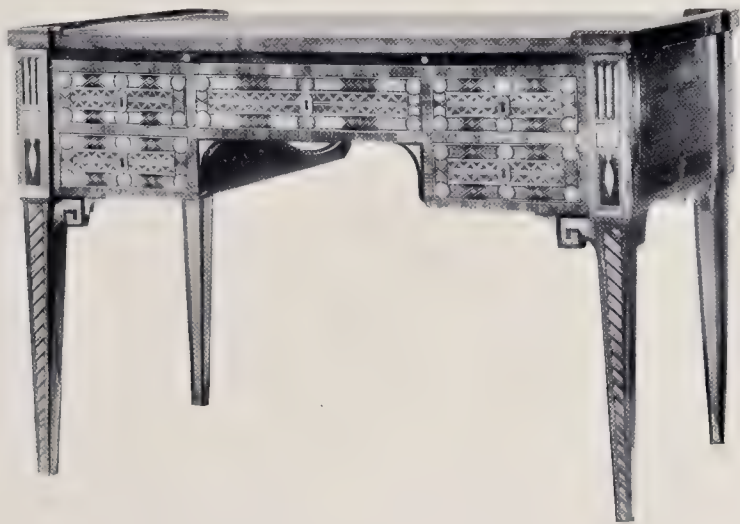


FIG. 301. MARQUETRY WRITING TABLE. LOMBARDY, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

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A new type of the great canopied bed is shown in Figure 266. This is one of the finest Venetian varieties designed in the Louis XVI. style, painted blue with carved decorations brought out in gold. The upholstered head-board, framed with a fluted and carved mould, has the original covering of rose silk damask patterned with a large floral design, but unfortunately



FIG. 302. MARQUETRY WRITING TABLE. NAPLES, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

not a vestige of the hangings has survived; these, draped from the carved and gilded elliptical crowning cornice and composed of a rich material, undoubtedly produced a magnificent appearance in their original state.

Only rarely are simpler beds of this character, similar to that illustrated in Figure 271, to be found. They are generally confined to Lombardy and the north central parts of the country. The one pictured does not retain its canopy which, without doubt, was constructed in a manner somewhat like that in Figure 266, as the supporting fluted and astragalled posts are

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too low to admit of a horizontal cornice. Italian beds of this simplicity were often hung with chintz or simple striped silk, both popular materials for the furnishing of smaller houses and villas.

There is a mistaken idea that chintz, printed cottons, and linens were not used by the Italians in the eighteenth century, but while they did not have

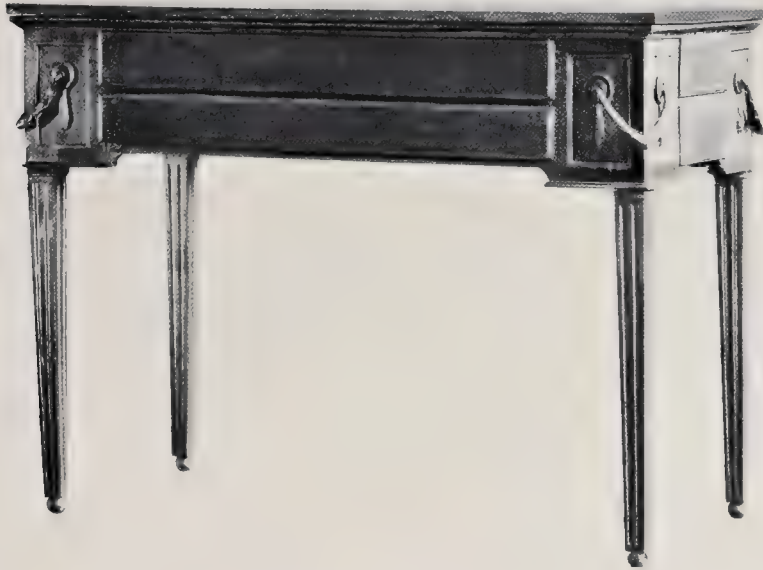


FIG. 303. WALNUT TABLE. EMILIA, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS WILLIAM BAYARD VAN RENSSELAER, ALBANY, NEW YORK

the vogue in Italy that they had in England, they were used to a considerable extent. In "The Journals and Correspondence of Miss Berry," the author speaks of having visited the Pope's manufactory of printed linen at Rome in 1784; about one hundred men were employed, but she says it cannot be made to pay and will possibly be given up, "and their patterns, particularly those for furniture taken from the arabesques; very elegant; the best, printed upon tolerably fine calico, cost about five shillings a yard English."

In several old documents of the period we find reference made to the use of printed cottons or chintzes; the same authority in giving an account

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of the Villa Bracciano near Rome writes that it is "well kept and finely situated, the rooms furnished with printed calicos and has the appearance of a comfortable English house." Even the sensuous and luxury-loving Venetians did not scorn the use of these simple materials, for in a letter dated 1771 Lady Miller describing the Venetian casini writes, "Those I saw were



FIG. 304. MARQUETRY WRITING TABLE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. ROME, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY

papered with India paper and furnished with chintz." As the letter was written in the month of June when the patricians were departing for their villas, in some instances these may have been summer furnishings.

From Piedmont, or its capital Turin, where the style of Louis XVI. found its purest expression, came the exquisite little blue and gold bed seen in Figure 267. A cursory inspection would lead one to doubt its Italian origin, yet in spite of the fact that French furniture still continued to be imported or else actually copied for the Turin palaces, the example shown has decided characteristics of north Italian work. On the head and foot

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boards, painted a rich yellow-cream, the panel decorations are composed of fine etchings done on a ground of gold; that of the foot piece is taken from Fragonard's "The Debut of the Model" and shows to what extent the fashionable residents of

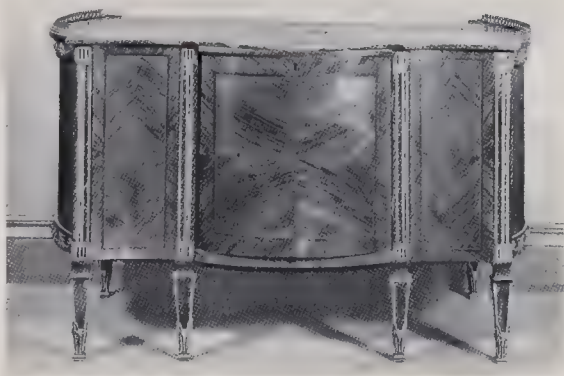


FIG. 305. SHOWING THE BACK OF FIG. 304

Turin affected the art of France. This servile imitation of the French court, the outcome of frequent alliances between the Houses of Savoy and Bourbon as well as the proximity of the two countries, continued up to the time of Napoleon's invasion, excluding, to a great extent, the influence of Albertoli and the Italian neo-classicists.

In Figure 269 is illustrated a charming example of characteristic Italian work, probably from Modena, in which colour and design are far superior to craftsmanship. The whole is painted a soft ultramarine blue; the slightly flaring head and foot board of equal height have below the original blue painted *canné* panels, larger panels painted with swags and sentimental motives suspended from bow-knots, all of which are done in tones of light yellow. These decorations are painted on both ends, as beds of the kind were usually placed lengthwise against the wall in the manner of those found in French boudoirs. The panels and rails are outlined with bands of yellow as are the flutings of the rails and the legs. Much of the furniture from Modena is in this pretty taste, quaint and colourful. The Modenese had the reputation of being a gay and cheerful people having "much genius for pantomime shows and what is called pleasure or dissipation," while the patricians imitated to their utmost the French.

Another bed constructed in the manner of the foregoing is illus-

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FIG. 306. CARVED WALNUT TABLE. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1775
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

trated in Figure 268. Again the head and foot boards, of equal height, are alike in design while the moulded rails are carved with vertical flutings. The colour of the ground is a soft light green and the carved ornament and moulds are gilded. As a whole the design may be considered in the Italian Louis Seize style, but it is modified by the Albertolli influence more

noticeably than the preceding example shown on page 221.

In the last quarter of the century, when the new style had been universally established, painted furniture had become more general. It was now much used in the villas, notably those of Venice and Rome, where whole suites decorated in a corresponding style were to be found in the smaller salons and bed-chambers. From some of the bed-chambers have come a large commode, two smaller ones, an armoire, a table, and a few chairs in addition to a bed painted in the same manner. These in their original environment must have presented a gay and pleasing effect placed against walls painted with water colour in bright hues or else panelled and

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painted in a combination of colours. On the beds and at the windows hung flowered and striped silks and printed or painted cloths.

With the more rigid establishment of country life as a social convention, villas naturally became more numerous and more comfortably furnished. For about half the year the upper classes were required to affect the *villeggiatura*. With many of the Lombard families and a few of the Genoese it became a period of rest, economy, or of agricultural interest, but with many more, notably the Venetians and Romans, life continued as artificial and frivolous as in town. In



FIG. 307. MARQUETRY TABLE. BOLOGNA,
ABOUT 1775
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

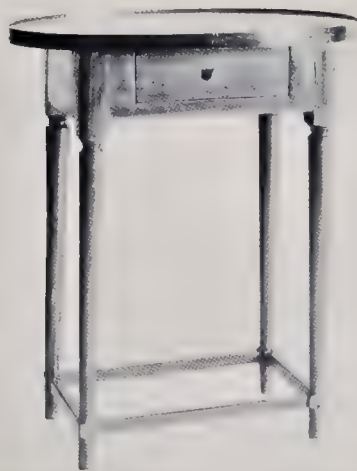


FIG. 308. TABLE. EMILIA, ABOUT LATE
XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

all cases the villas were planned and furnished with reference to the great heat. There were few chimney-pieces, and window and bed hangings were sparingly used. Walls were made cool and delightful with fresco or stucco decorations when not washed with bright tints of water colour. Floors of concrete and marble; painted furniture, chairs with open backs, often with rush seats; chintzes and painted linens; fountains and statuary; orange and lemon trees in terra cotta jars, jessamine and other flowering plants in marbles, made these retreats of the Italians

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FIG. 309. WALNUT TABLE. EMILIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF FRANK ALVAH PARSONS, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

Borghese villas. In the "Invito à Nice," written in 1779, he recounts the feasts and tournaments, a perpetual carnival being kept up in the numerous apartments and the lovely gardens of the villas. Silvagni also records animated scenes of garden parties at the villas scattered all along the Via Salna, Via Nomentana, and other roads leading out of Rome in the direction of the Quirinale Hill, and how the highway to the Villa Sciarra on an afternoon in May, 1783,

among the most entrancing of all European country houses.

As we know, the villas of Venice and Rome were more intimately associated with fashionable life. Long before garden parties had been heard of in England they were a favourite form of Italian amusement. From the works of Vincenzo Monti, a poet of the House of Borghese, we learn of the gay and jocund life at the



FIG. 310. MARQUETRY TABLE. BOLOGNA, ABOUT 1775-80
THE PROPERTY OF FRANK ALVAH PARSONS, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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was almost impassable with gilded coaches "with fine ladies, elegant cavaliers and gay abbés" going to a garden party.

It was at the Venetian villas that frivolity was carried to excess but not without the picturesque charm of that decadent age. Though practically no villas of any importance were built, except the "Stra" of the Pisani, yet the earlier ones re-

ceived their share of embellishment in the new style. The Brenta, which had become dotted with country houses, was still the most popular resort for the villegiatura. In the latter part of the century La Mira seemed to Beckford "A village of palaces, whose courts and gardens, as magnificent as statues, terraces, and vases can make them, are far from composing a rural aspect."

And desire for luxury and display was by no means confined to the patricians. At Venice the rich bourgeoisie wished to possess houses in the country. Constantini informs us that well-to-do merchants spent as much as twenty or thirty thousand crowns on the building of a villa, and this



FIG. 311. WALNUT TABLE. MILAN, ABOUT 1800
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

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FIG. 312. INLAID TABLE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY

Venice sold cheeses or measured out cloth over the counter, assuming aristocratic ways when at their villas. The women changed their dress three or four times a day and every detail of their life they tried to pattern after the extravagant nobles. Naturally they must furnish their houses in an adequate style, and while, no doubt, this imitation often resulted in a grotesque display, it also accounts for some of the delightfully crude products which have, in their attempts at the decorative side of the life of that age, a certain quaintness and charm.

amount did not include the furniture and other fittings, the horses and coaches. The middle classes and the merchants, who dared not ape the nobility when in town for fear of ridicule or the sumptuary officers, at once gave themselves the airs of patricians when they went into the country. Dotti quaintly ridicules the folly of those who in



FIG. 313. INLAID DRESSING TABLE. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY, END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

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Three pieces illustrated in Figures 280 and 281, forming part of a bedroom suite, came from one of the lesser Venetian villas. Though they are constructed in a crude and hasty way of inferior wood, their painted decorations show refinement worthy of a patrician villa. The ground colour is a greenish gold, on this are combined tones of green and yellow-red in a highly characteristic Venetian colour scheme. The tops are grained to imitate a light yellow wood with bands of darker veneer. These pieces are in the style of the



FIG. 314. INLAID CHILD'S TABLE.
EMILIA, ABOUT 1790

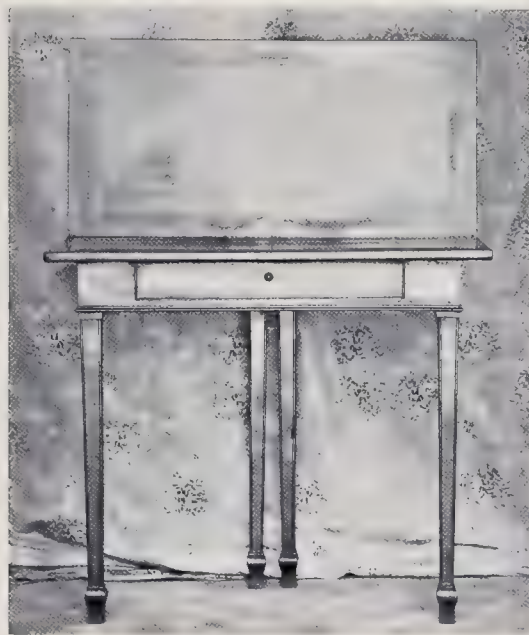


FIG. 315. FOLDING TABLE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII
CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

late eighteenth century, popularly called "Venetian Directoire."

The practice of grain-
ing wood in imitation of
veneers was in the height
of fashion in France in
the last years of the
century at the time the
Directoire style was be-
ginning to give way to
that of the Empire. In
Italy the style was prac-
tised in the north to some
extent in the manner of
the commode shown in
Figure 284, in France it
was confined more to imi-
tating panels and bands

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FIG. 316. WALNUT TABLE. LIGURIA, OR EMILIA,
LATE XVIII CENTURY

of veneer combined with lines of colour, while in Italy we meet with the same treatment enhanced with panels of painted arabesques as shown in this example.

Two more commodes that undoubtedly formed part of a villa bedroom suite are shown in Figures 282 and 283. In simplicity of form and style of decoration they resemble the piece seen in Figure 280. The colour scheme, how-



FIG. 317. WALNUT TABLE. EMILIA, OR LIGURIA,
ABOUT 1780-90
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

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ever, is varied. On a background of soft ultramarine are medallions of classical figures *en grisaille* on darker grounds, while the scrolls connecting these are in tones of red and darker blue with a note of brown. The end panels and the edge of the drawers are outlined with bands of darker blue, while the top is marbled.

In Figure 276 is illustrated one of the finer forms from a Venetian palace. It has a serpentine front, concave sides, and rounded corners and is embellished with motifs both carved and painted. In the centre of the front and sides of the curved bottom are medallions and ribbon bow-knots in relief and colour. From these and on the rounded corners are painted sprays of flowers in naturalistic colours. The drawers and sides which are panelled with a delicately carved mould are also painted with sprays of flowers, while the handles are composed of the same motifs. The background is yellow-cream.



FIG. 318. INTERIOR SHOWING VENETIAN DINING ROOM OF THE LATE XVIII CENTURY

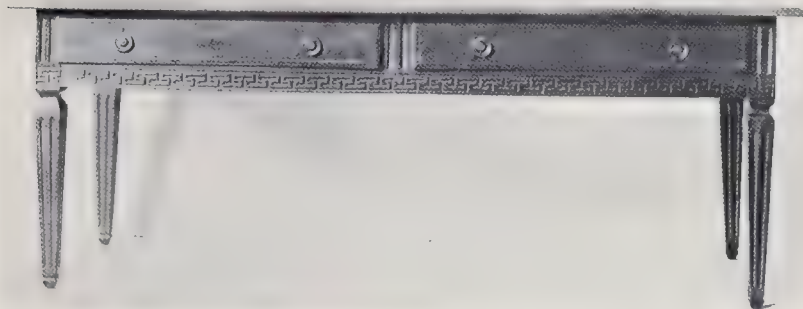


FIG. 319. WALNUT TABLE. LIGURIA, OR EMILIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 320. BLUE AND GOLD DINING TABLE WITH MARBLE TOP. ROME, ABOUT 1800
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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Armoires, and cabinets of various other forms as well as commodes were, at times, carefully ornamented by the decorative painters of this period. A notable corner cabinet of unusually high proportions is illustrated in Figure 287. Coming originally from the Villa Caprarola, its beautiful ornamentation proves that the high decorative standards of a notable Renaissance villa could be maintained in this so-called decadent age. Blending as it does antique and Renaissance arabesques, interpreted in the lighter



FIG. 321. WHITE AND GOLD MIRROR FRAME. LOMBARDY OR PIEDMONTE, LATE XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 322. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR. ROME, ABOUT 1790
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

manner of the eighteenth century, it shows the Roman style at its best, recalling at the same time the work of the French and English decorators who drew their inspiration from this school. The panels, suggesting in arrangement the classic work of the Cinquecento, have backgrounds of alternating colours, those of the four larger ones being antique yellow with symbolic figures, swags and scrolls in various hues, while the narrower ones, both horizontal and vertical, have delicate designs rendered *en grisaille* on backgrounds of green. The stiles are painted in a different tone of green.

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Figure 285 is a semi-circular form with two doors and drawers above, showing a less finely organized design of more provincial character. Its colour, nevertheless, which is its chief decorative value finds a medium in the decorations of the two large panels painted in several colours on a background



FIG. 323. PAINTED TABLE. PIEDMONTE, ABOUT 1775
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

of yellow-cream. These are framed with borders of light green ornamented with a design done in cream. Figure 288, one of a pair of lower corner cabinets painted in the colder and more correct Roman style, have backgrounds of light green for motifs in several hues.

Marquetry work, which had been growing steadily in favour since the last decade of the seventeenth century, reached during this period the highest state of its technical and decorative development. Panels of drawers and doors of various cabinets, as well as tops of tables, afforded ample

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surfaces for the most elaborate work. The marquetry of the eighteenth century differs as much from the intarsia of the Renaissance in its tech-



FIG. 324. PAINTED TABLE. VENICE, ABOUT 1775-80
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. H. H. ROGERS, NEW YORK CITY

nical process as in its design. The method of the mediaeval craftsmen and those of the Renaissance was to cut forms in the wood according to a prearranged pattern; into these cavities were laid pieces of different coloured woods and occasionally other materials. Marquetry being

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a form of veneer, the whole of the surface, both pattern and background, is applied.

Lombardy was the centre of the industry; here were no end of shops turning out furniture embellished in this style after numerous ide-



FIG. 325. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

signs of Albertolli and his pupils. Commodes are the most common articles found decorated successfully in this way, two representative types of the finer work from the vicinity of Milan being shown in Figures 290 and 291. Even the most elaborate of these were generally of simple rectangular forms, some varied with slightly canted corners as in Figure 290.

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In this example the front is spaced into three drawers; the larger centre one contains a medallion motif imitating an ancient bas-relief from which flow acanthus scrolls and cornucopias in the cold Lombard style, while the two smaller drawers are ornamented with the popular foliated scroll. Outlining the drawers, the top, and the panels of the side are diagonal bands of different coloured woods.

Figure 291 is another arrangement sometimes met with. Instead of the whole front being divided into drawers, there is one long drawer at the top, a large hinged panel below concealing the other drawers. Pieces of this construction were found more often in salons and dining-rooms, while the regularly spaced drawers served as receptacles for articles of wearing apparel or as dressing cases in bed-chambers and boudoirs. The same system of outlining with various woods

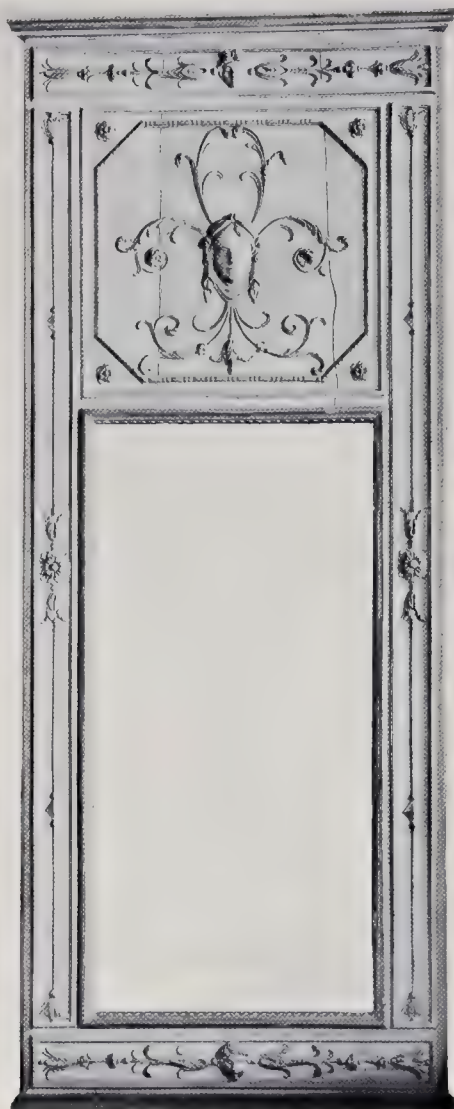


FIG. 326. CONSOLE MIRROR ACCOMPANYING
FIG. 325

ITALIAN FURNITURE

in diagonal and cross bands of different colours occurs, while filling the panel of the top drawer is a variation of a much used interlacing pattern. The large hinged panel is worked with an elliptical form of allegorical sig-



FIG. 327. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

nificance, supported by grotesque figures ending in a large foliated scroll. The top is of gray marble.

Another variation is shown in Figure 294. Here the front contains three evenly spaced drawers embellished with foliated scrolls, the ends being filled with one large panel. The drawers, panels, and other structural parts are all banded in the usual manner. An important and noticeable

ITALIAN FURNITURE

feature is the frequent use of hardware on the cabinet work of this period, handles of metal being used, often designed in the style of marquetry. Though not having the same jewel-like finish as French work they are frequently of beautiful design, as this illustration proves.

In Figure 295 is seen one of the semi-circular commodes more often found among the finer specimens adapted from French designs. This piece when compared with Figures 290, 291, and 294 illustrates the difference between the more original Italian work of this period and the Italian adaptation of Louis XVI. design.



FIG. 328. CONSOLE MIRROR ACCOMPANYING FIG. 327

One of a pair of corner cabinets pictured in Figure 293 should be studied as the highest type of original Italian design of the late eighteenth century. The front contains two doors forming a large panel outlined with bands of ornamental marquetry, enclosing two beautiful



FIG. 329. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. VENETIAN, ABOUT 1780
COURTESY OF KILLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

grisaille panels, with figures. The top and bottom are banded with herring-bone marquetry, the canted corners have panels of the same, and the top which is of scaglia, a substance formed of small pieces of marble, is banded with an ormolu mount.

Figure 296 may be called one of the Tuscan examples of the "Italian Louis Seize." Though in the spirit of French design, most of its details evincing a recognition of the French masters' work, its ensemble and certain parts of its detail, such as the band of inlay outlining the lower panel containing the two drawers, and the scale of the husk pendants in the narrow vertical panels which flank it, are indications of its Italian origin. It is true little artistic impetus was given to the style of Florence by the new Grand Duke, Peter Leopold, yet he established a petty court that gave big parties and inaugurated a kind of social life that encouraged the aristocracy to brighten up their old palaces with new furnishings in the style of France, for the Grand Duke was a brother of Marie Antoinette and naturally not insensible to the fashion prevailing at Versailles. This accounts for occasional furniture from Florence in quite a pure Louis Seize style.

The cabinet illustrated in Figure 297 is one of higher quality de-



FIG. 330. CARVED WOOD PANEL FROM A PANELLED INTERIOR. TURIN, ABOUT 1780



FIG. 331. PAINTED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 332. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. VENICE, ABOUT 1785
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

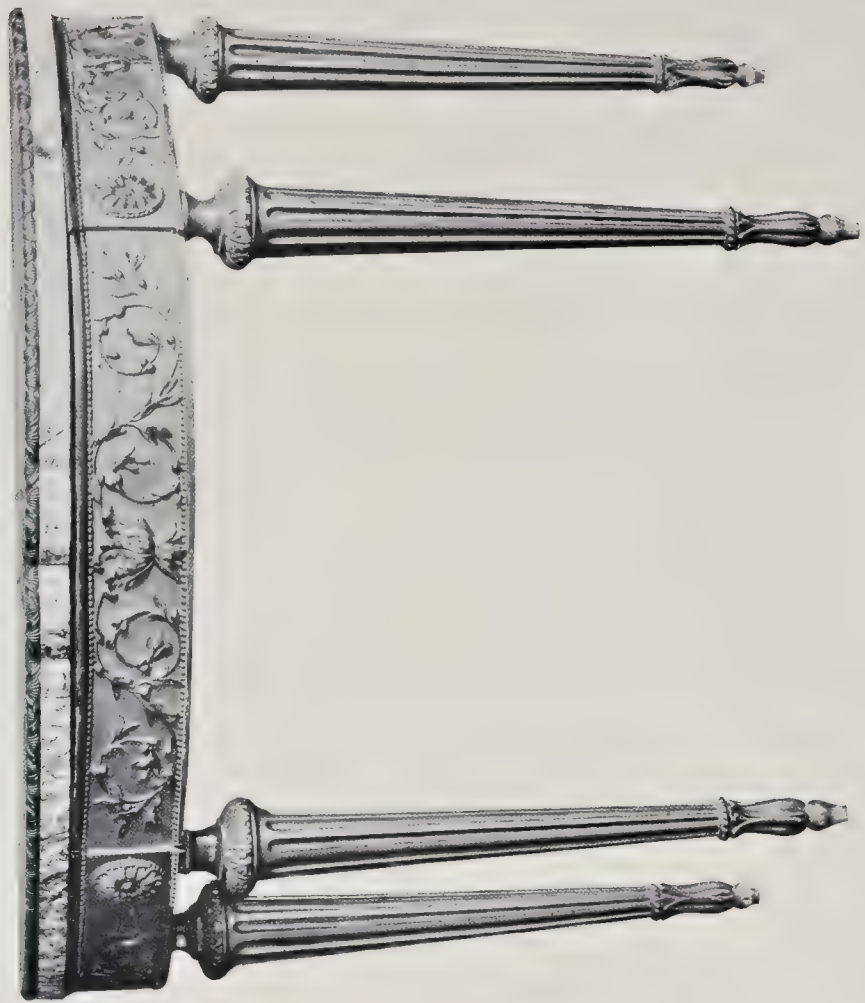


FIG. 333. GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

signed at the time the Classic style of Italy was beginning to formulate a more original expression. In its general scale and structure as well as its selection and arrangement of ornament it displays a thoroughly Italian character. The lower body, in the form of a commode with a marble top, has a large hinged panel in front, concealing compartments with drawers. On

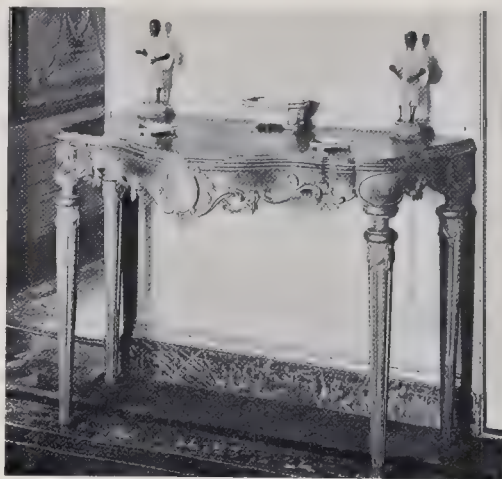


FIG. 334. PAINTED AND GILDED TABLE. VENICE,
ABOUT 1765-70

THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

this section is placed an independent structure divided into three compartments, each with a hinged door ornamented with marquetry. This, like the lower body, has a marble top, while in the upper part of both is a long narrow drawer. The intarsia, especially that of the large, lower panel, is of unusually fine design, the original cartoon, now in the Museo Civico at Milan, was executed by a well-known painter of that day. As in the former Rococo period the ornament of Italian furniture of this period rarely shows the minute detail and delicacy of the French; Italian forms, in general being larger and less finished in their craftsmanship, required more vigorous and freely sketched detail. That the producer of this piece had recourse to the designs of contemporary French masters could not easily be doubted, for such details as the feet could only be derivations from the type used by Riesener in the design of the commode now in the Ministère de la Marine at Paris. Yet the French cabinet nearest related to this piece would be the tall secrétaire built in one body with upper compartments revealed by a fall front, the lower section containing drawers or doors. In French work the upper section rarely recedes except in the sec-



FIG. 335. MIRROR FRAME. NAPLES, OR ROME,
ABOUT 1780
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES OF ROME

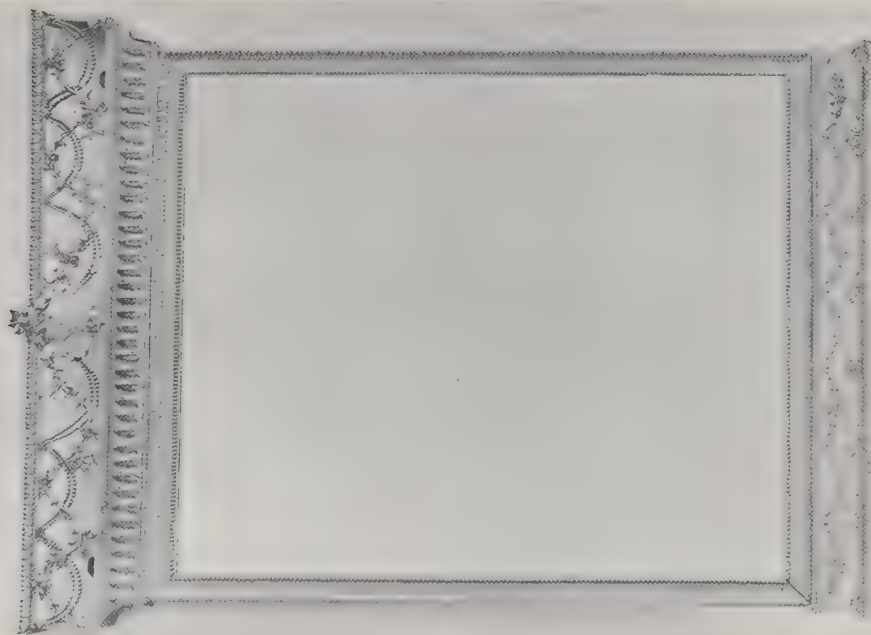


FIG. 336. CARVED AND PAINTED MIRROR FRAME.
VENICE, ABOUT 1780
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES O. GREEN, NEW YORK CITY

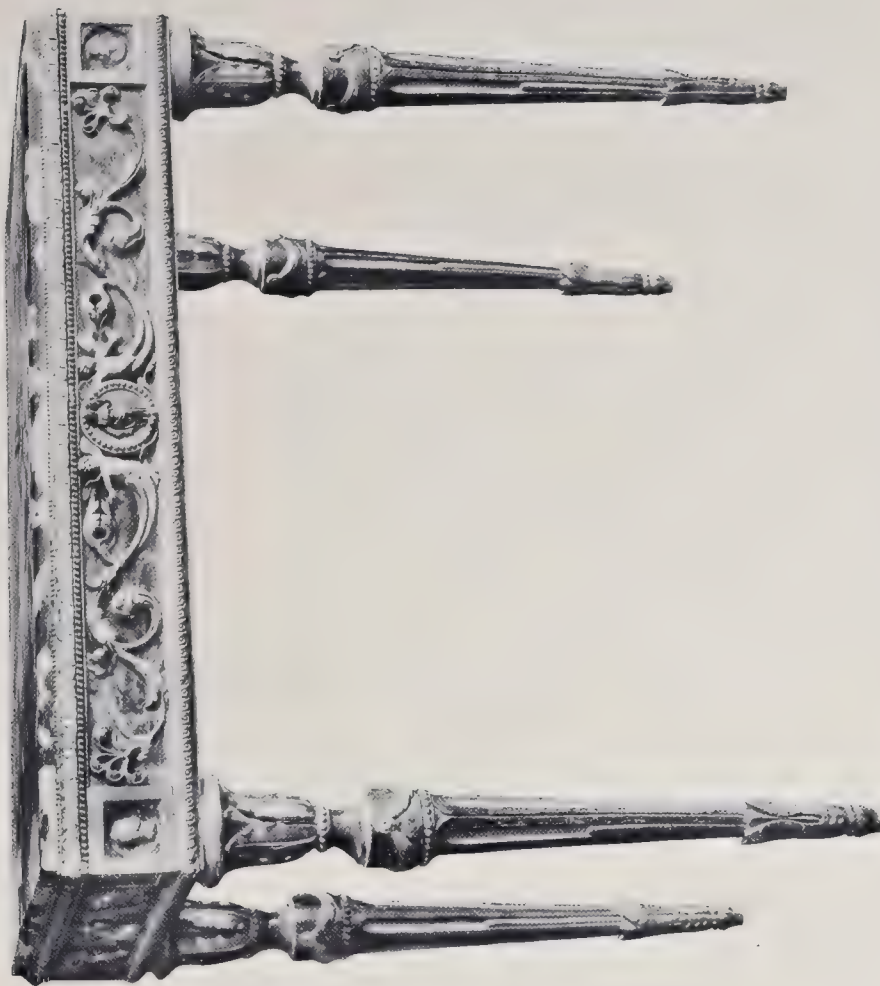


FIG 337. CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT THE END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 338. PAINTED AND
GILDED MIRROR FRAME.
VENICE, ABOUT 1775-80
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

top and bottom, were no doubt inspired by the exquisitely sculptured ormolu mounts used in French work, while the little cameo medallions suspended from bow-knots were frequently used in the succeeding period of

rétairie of a type generally placed on a stand or desk.

While much of the cabinet work in the vicinity of Milan and the Italian lakes found its highest expression in marquetry, from the provinces a little farther south—in the neighbourhood of Modena, Cremona, and Parma—have come many of the successfully carved walnut pieces in this style. Of these the commode illustrated in Figure 298 is an excellent example. This and the one shown in the succeeding figure may be considered characteristic expositions of "Italian Louis Seize." Of the two, Figure 298 deserves the greater consideration, for its subtly curved front and sides and its delicately carved ornament show a refinement of uncommon degree. The finely carved moulds outlining the drawers, the end panels, the

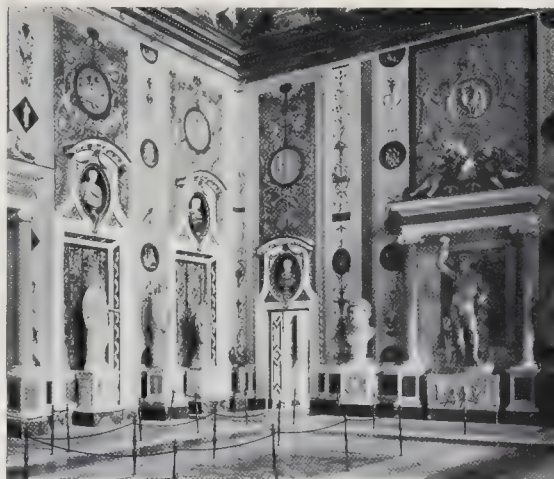


FIG. 339. INTERIOR OF THE VILLA BORGHESE AT ROME,
DECORATED ABOUT 1800

ITALIAN FURNITURE

eighteenth century Italian classicism that has been too often erroneously styled "Italian Directoire." Figure 299 is of rectangular form with slightly rounded corners ornamented with the guilloche while the three drawers are outlined with a carved husk motif. The use of little wooden knobs instead of fine metal handles is a noticeable Italian feature.

Many of the writing desks of this period are in the form of a table with drawers arranged in the manner of Figures 300, 301, and 302. These are representative of the types embellished with marquetry, which generally consisted of bands of herringbone outlining the drawers, while the panels of tops and sides contained medallions and other geometrical motifs. The Italian designers preferred tops

of decorative marquetry—the tops universally being the most elaborate in design—instead of those inlaid in the manner of the French and English, with panels of leather and cloth. In many of the Italian pieces, however, this was provided for in slides that generally pulled out from under the top in the front.

An ambitious attempt at the Louis Seize style is illustrated in the desk shown in Figures 304 and 305. It is by no means characteristic of

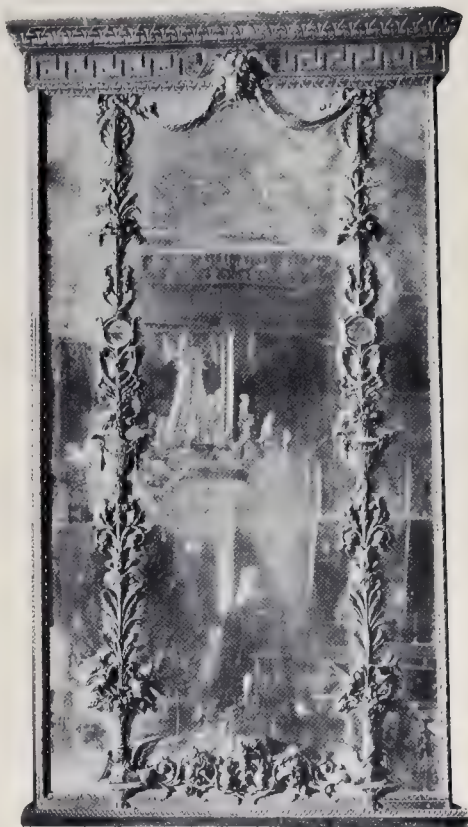


FIG. 340. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME.
ROME, END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES OF ROME

ITALIAN FURNITURE

Italian work and is without doubt an Italian craftsman's copy of a French model, for the Italians rarely employed metal mounts to this extent. The front is serpentine, the back being of the same form reversed, while both



FIG. 341. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. LOMBARDY, OR LIGURIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

of the convex ends are filled with tambour slides. The drawers are quartered with veneer, banded with diagonal bands and delicate metal mounts; the feet are mounted with a design of rams' heads and swags, the key-hole escutcheon being composed of the same motifs, while the ends are banded at the top and bottom with similar ornaments. The top, mounted at each end with a metal rail, is inlaid with a geometrical pattern of highly characteristic Italian design.

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The existence of numerous smaller tables such as little writing tables, dressing-tables, gaming tables, and various small stands is a proof of the fact that the Italians were beginning to appreciate to a certain extent the furnish-



FIG. 342. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. LOMBARDY, ABOUT THE END OF THE XVIII CENTURY

ings of smaller rooms. Though small and intimate interiors are in no sense representative of the Italian house, yet during this period, when the families of the nobles had become impoverished and when their galleries and salons were no more than private museums to which a recommended public had easy access, they were forced more than ever to confine their private life to the mezzanine and other less magnificent apartments. The enormous halls and galleries in some of the palaces were practically closed for years, for many patrician families had become so impoverished that they could



FIG. 343. CARVED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE WITH PORPHYRY INSERTS AND MARBLE TOP. ROME, ABOUT 1775
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

not afford even a stupid conversazione because of the great number of candles needed to light the apartments.

It was not only from the private apartments of the great houses that the smaller forms came, for no inconsiderable amount of amusing furniture was designed for the numerous casini and for the boxes at the opera and theatre, both being used as drawing-rooms more than the great salons in the palaces. The casino was occasionally a little house but more generally a suite of small rooms furnished in a more intimate way with a type of furniture that may be compared to that of the small French drawing-room, for it was there the lady of distinction had her salon, concerning which there are many conflicting reports. Nevertheless, they were attractively furnished and this accounts for many of the smaller chairs, settees, and tables designed in the late eighteenth century style. The convention was quite general throughout Italy, but the Venetian casini were the most important. The piazza San Marco was full of them, one authority claiming there were one hundred and thirty during the later part of the century. Lady Mary



FIG. 344. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT THE END OF THE XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 345. GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT THE END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE BORGHESE PALACE, ROME

ITALIAN FURNITURE

Montague writes from Venice to her daughter: "It is the fashion to have little houses of retreat, where the lady goes every evening at seven or eight o'clock, and is visited by all her intimates of both sexes, which commonly amount to seventy or eighty persons, where they have play,



FIG. 346. GREEN AND GOLD CONSOLE TABLE. FLORENCE, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF WILLIAM T. GRANT, ESQ., PELHAM, NEW YORK

concerts and music, sometimes dancing, and always a handsome colation. I believe you will think these little assemblies very pleasing; they really are so, whosoever is well acquainted with Venice must admit that it is the centre of pleasure; not so noisy, and, in my opinion, more refined than Paris."

All of the opera and theatre boxes belonging to the ladies of fashion were likewise veritable little salons, charmingly and individually furnished with silk hangings, pretty chairs, settees and tables, besides mirrored wall appliques for candles. We read that Madame Aldrovandi's box at Bologna was "hung with beautiful pale blue and silver silk and lighted up with wax, as they all are, in silver sconces. The Cardinal's box is much larger than the others, and is placed in the centre of the second range or tier of boxes; it is lined

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FIG. 347. TOP OF FIG. 348

and paid but little attention to the piece. In addition to the great theatre (built in 1760) at Bologna there was a smaller one called the "Little Theatre." The boxes were furnished according to the different tastes of the owners: "Some are hung with rich Lyons silks, brocaded with gold or silver, others with plain damasks with gold fringe."

There were the coffee houses, too, which at Leghorn, according to de Archenholtz, "were the finest in Europe; they abound with the most modish and exquisite ornaments; the rooms are full of large pier glasses and are most sumptuously illuminated at night." From the old engravings of the period we learn that the coffee houses of Venice were often attractively furnished with little chairs, settees, and tables arranged against a classical architectural background.

In Figure 306 is illustrated one of the numerous small tables of the period, designed in the true Italian pseudo-classic style. Like the commode of similar design, illustrated in Figure 298, it is of a light toned walnut, displaying delicate and charming de-

with crimson velvet, beautifully ornamented. During the opera, refreshments are brought into the boxes consisting of iced and preserved fruits, biscuits, lemonade, orgeat, etc." The Bolognese ladies frequently had card parties in their boxes



FIG. 348. RED AND GOLD CONSOLE TABLE. VENETIAN, SECOND HALF OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF KELLER AND CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

tail. Figure 311 is a Lombard example of finer quality derived from the French. Supported on legs carved with banded arrows, unusual for their design as for the delicacy of their execution, is a body containing a drawer and a compartment that is revealed by the hinged and moulded top. The back is finished in the manner of the front and sides.



FIG. 349. BLUE AND GOLD CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT THE END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER, NEW YORK CITY

Two small Bolognese tables showing the influence of French design are seen in Figures 307 and 310. The first of these, of oval form, has its top and sides decorated with marquetry work. Bands of veneer, including a centre one of burr wood, fill the surface of the apron; the top is also framed with a border contrasting with a field of burr wood in which is laid a quartered lozenge form outlined with several bands. Italian

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 350. CARVED AND GILDED TABLE.
ROME, END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF MARTIN, NEW YORK CITY

originality is displayed in the treatment of the fluted and astragalled legs, instead of the square carved tablet being applied to the apron as in French work, a square member has been placed at the top of the legs to accommodate it. In practically all French tables where the apron was not disturbed by the legs the tablet would be entirely omitted. Figure 310, also inspired by a French model, is largely veneered with mahogany. The corners are canted and the legs are treated in the manner of the preceding table. A generous drawer with compartments and a sliding leaf



FIG. 351. GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. J. BORDEN HARRIMAN, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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suggests a small writing table. Figure 315 is one of the numerous card tables mainly veneered with walnut; it has gate legs and a folding top.

From northern Emilia and Lombardy come numerous little toilet tables embellished with marquetry and painted decoration designed in the style of the one pictured in Figure 312. The drawers are outlined with diagonal and geometrical bands of inlay; the top is divided into three hinged sections



FIG. 352. CORNER TABLE. NORTH ITALY, LATE XVIII CENTURY

FROM THE ART MUSEUM OF THE COOPER INSTITUTE, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 353. WHITE AND GOLD CONSOLE TABLE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF OGDEN CODMAN, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

with panels of similar decoration; the centre section of the top, which is hinged at the back, forms a mirror, and when raised reveals a compartment for toilet articles. The end sections are hinged at the end of the table and when raised enlarge the surface of the top. This is the usual structure of practically all the toilet tables of this period, including those more elaborate ones with designs of marquetry and painting.

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FIG. 354. CARVED AND GILDED
WALL BRACKETS. MONZA,
ABOUT 1780
FROM THE ROYAL PALACE AT MONZA

A variety of the simpler carved tables of the Emilian and Lombardy types are shown in Figures 316, 317, and 319. These are from the better households of the smaller towns in these provinces where the bourgeoisie were comparatively comfortable and often possessed of considerable means. No small amount of lighter toned walnut furniture carved in a coarser manner is found in this style. Some are marked by simplicity and a practical aspect indicating an inherent sense of design, as displayed in Figures 316 and 319. Figure 317 is one of a pair of wall serving-tables containing a large drawer.

Figure 319 is a large centre table containing two large drawers, the ends and the opposite side being finished with long, slightly projecting panels having the same appearance.

Few dining tables survive from this period, yet fewer still from that of the Rococo. We know, however, from old engravings that dining tables (Figure 318), quite in the modern sense, were in general use. In fact, it was during this epoch, as it was in France and England, that important tables of this character first became general. Previously great boards



FIG. 355. PAINTED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, OR
NAPLES, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES OF ROME

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laid on trestles and covered with fine linen, laces, or silk were used on festive occasions, the centre of the large dining apartment being left free when not in use.

Though we have many inconsistent reports of the unsociability of the Italians in the second half of the eighteenth century we know that dinner and supper parties were the order of the day, though perhaps not so generally as in England and France. In the northern provinces, especially at Milan and Turin, we have many references to the dinner parties of that day. Mrs. Piozzi writes from Milan, November, 1784: "It is surprising how very elegant, not to say magnificent, those dinners are in gentlemen's or noblemen's houses; such number of dishes at once; not large joints; but infinite variety, and I think



FIG. 356. CONSOLE TABLE AND MIRROR. MILAN, OR MONZA,
LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

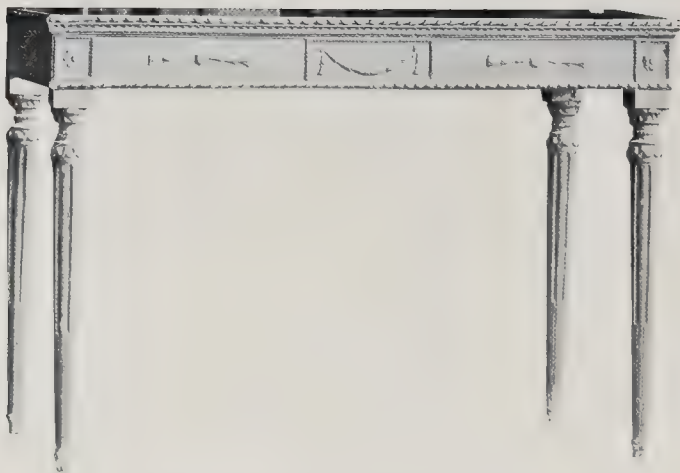


FIG. 357. PAINTED CONSOLE TABLE. LIVORNO, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 358. GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

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their cooking excellent." She adds, "Fashion keeps most of the fine people out of town yet." From Turin we learn, "All the Ambassadors and foreign ministers entertain very handsomely, as well as frequently, at their respective



FIG. 359. BLUE AND GOLD CONSOLE TABLE.
ROME, ABOUT 1800

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

houses, proportionally to their appointments; but the Spanish Ambassador's table surpasses all others in quantity and quality; the King of Spain having ordered the Comte D'Ayguilar (the present Ambassador from Spain) to exceed in magnificence all the others, without exception, etc."

Numerous documents of this description are very convincing in spite of the fact that most historians and casual investigators of eighteenth cen-

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FIG. 360. CARVED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, ABOUT 1800

COURTESY OF SANGIORGI GALLERIES OF ROME

tury Italy would lead us to believe that Italy was, without any exception, a dull, stupid place, her mode of social life disregarding all that urbanity and refinement of polished European society and that her people were degraded, immoral, and impoverished. Taking into consideration the restriction and modifications induced by poverty

of a once rich and powerful aristocracy, conventions were much the same as elsewhere in Europe.

One of the few palace dining tables surviving from the latter part of this period is shown in Figure 320. Coming from the state dining-room of the Borghese Palace it adequately expresses the sumptuousness of a Roman apartment toward the close of the eighteenth century, when design began to show many characteristics of the approaching Empire Style. This is clearly seen in the form of the legs, while the carved motif on the apron and the lion heads from which the garlands are suspended



FIG. 361. GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. NAPLES, OR ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 362. PAINTED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. ROME, OR NAPLES, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 363. CARVED WOOD AND PAINTED CHIMNEY-PIECE. VENICE, LATE XVIII CENTURY

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also indicate the approaching domination of the Empire taste. The background colour of the whole is light blue; the ornament is emphasized with gold and a handsome slab of cream marble composes the top.



FIG. 364. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME. EMILIA, OR VENETIA, ABOUT 1770-80
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

It is amazing that such prodigality in the furnishing of Roman palaces should have continued up to the invasion of the French tri-colour, considering the impoverishment of most of the great Roman houses and the fact that Rome had long since fallen from her high estate. Still with each succeeding Pontiff great houses arose which could be aggrandized by the concentration of wealth. As Addison says, "it is to the humour of despotism that Rome owed its splendour and magnificence of the eighteenth

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century for it would have been impossible to have furnished out so many glorious palaces, etc., had not the riches of the people at several times fallen into the hands of many different families and particular persons." These palaces were never the result of mercantile wealth or feudal enterprise, they belong to the history of the church and as Lady Morgan writes, "are monuments of the prodigality of the Popes to their illegitimate children or of the indulgence of the fatal nepotism which originated a class of tyrants in Rome unknown in the rest of Italy."

In addition to the magnificent display of the Braschi and other newly established papal families there were, however, a few of the older aristocracy who managed to maintain their sumptuous environment. The most prominent of these were the Borghese who continued to add to the embellishment of their palaces and villas. Miss Berry, who was in Rome in 1784, says the Borghese prince of that day "took a sort of pride in making it (the villa) the first thing of the kind in Europe, and lays by a sum of money to be yearly expended during his lifetime in its embellishment." She further



FIG. 365. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME.
LIGURIA, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1775
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 366. GREEN AND GOLD PEDESTALS. ROME, OR NAPLES, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MISS GHEEN, INC., NEW YORK CITY

says, "he is employing all the celebrated modern artists to fit up rooms for him."

Venetian art of the second half of the eighteenth century presents a

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striking contrast to that of Rome. It seemed that as the nobles became more impoverished and extravagant art reached a higher state of delicate sensuousness. Their expression of the pseudo-classic has not that coldness and dryness that is often met with in the work of Albertolli and his school, that heavy sumptuousness of the Roman artists or the fine monotonous detail of Piedmont. Instead there is fused with classicism the warmth and freedom of the rococo, classic motifs, simple structure being expressed in the most enchanting colour, as exemplified in the little wall table illustrated in Figure 324. This is one of the jewels of the Venetian pseudo-classic. Cream legs with delicate flutings

brought out in blue-green, feet carved with leaves and caps with beaded moulds, support an apron with a background of cream. In the centre of the front is a marble bas-relief of "Leda and the Swan" framed with a mould of green; at the corners are small reliefs of unglazed porcelain set in frames of green, and suspended from the ribbon bow-knots are flower swags in tones of red, blue, and green. The top is of marble inlaid with a large geometrical pattern consisting of verde antique, siena, black, and gold.

The console tables of this period, numerous as they were beautiful, were without doubt among the finest pieces of European furniture design of the late eighteenth century. Forms as a rule were based on the rectangular and semi-circular, while supports, both round and square, were straight and tapering. In nearly all cases tables were accompanied by tall mirrors with frames designed alike, and sometimes incorporated into the panelling of the room; for this reason fewer tables with mirrors intact like those seen in Figures 325 and 327 are found. Both sets are from Roman salons which were generally large and lofty in their proportions, with fine cornices and painted ceilings, while the walls beneath were hung with damasks,



FIG. 367. WHITE AND GOLD
MIRROR FRAME. LATE
XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO.,
NEW YORK CITY

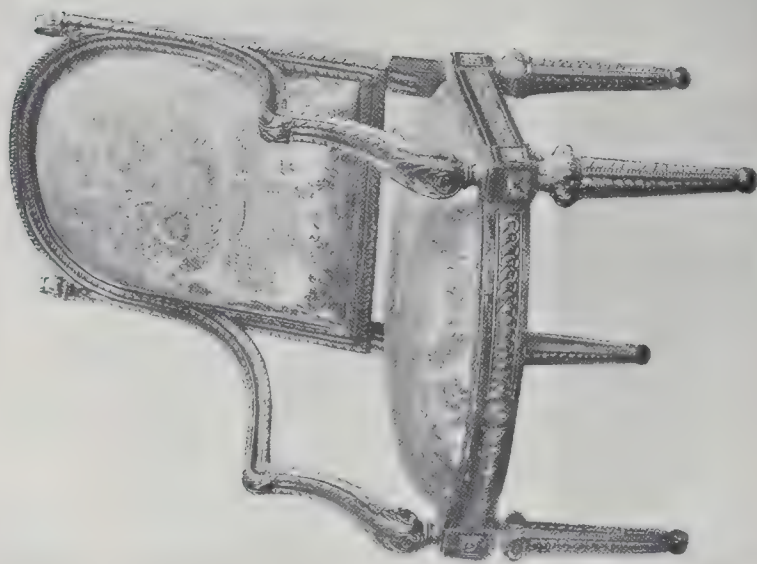


FIG. 368. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. ROME, ABOUT 1780
FROM THE BORGHESI PALACE

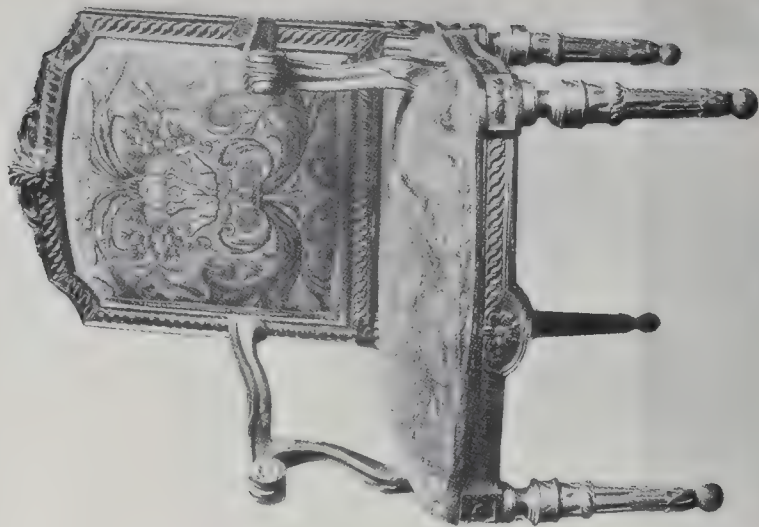


FIG. 369. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. ROME, ABOUT 1780
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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brocades, or striped silks. The doors, chimney-pieces, console tables, and mirrors, however, formed the important architectural features of the elevations. The doors were as a rule symmetrically arranged, generally painted and over them often extending to the cornice were carved and painted panels; these were frequently composed of flowers, landscapes, and bas-relief *en grisaille*. Over the chimney-pieces and console tables the same treatment was repeated.

Both Figures 325 and 326, from a set of six consoles and mirrors, are painted cream and have carved and gilded decorations, this still being a favourite colour scheme for the Roman and Neapolitan salon. These date quite late in

the century, for a certain stiffness of the motifs, the frequent use of the human and grotesque head, and the design of the square tapering legs, all show clearly the beginning of the following style. Accompanying these were generally chairs, settees, and benches of white and gold with coverings of yellow, red, or blue silk, while walls and windows were hung with a material of the same colour.

The succeeding table shown in Figure 327 is of a date only a few years earlier. The legs, which still retain much of the character of the earlier phase of the style, with stiff leaves forming the caps, have a decided Empire flavour. In the same taste are the tablet decorations placed directly over them in the frieze, while the general form and proportions of the whole, with



FIG. 370. CARVED AND GILDED SIDE CHAIR.
LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

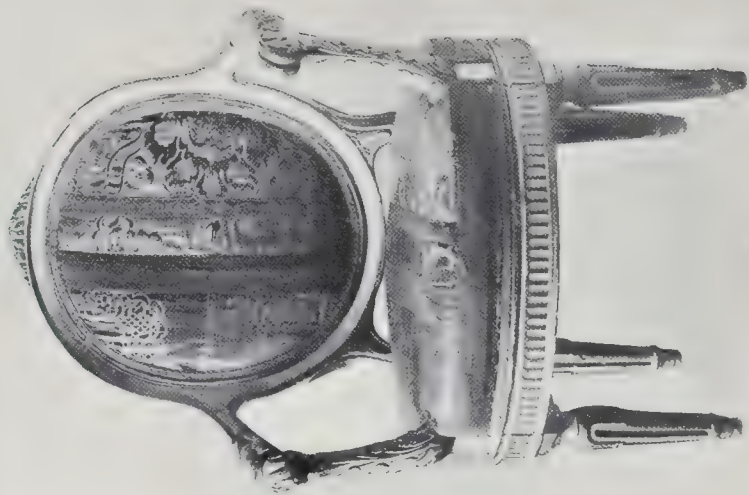


FIG. 371. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. NAPLES, ABOUT 1775
THE PROPERTY OF THE MISSES SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

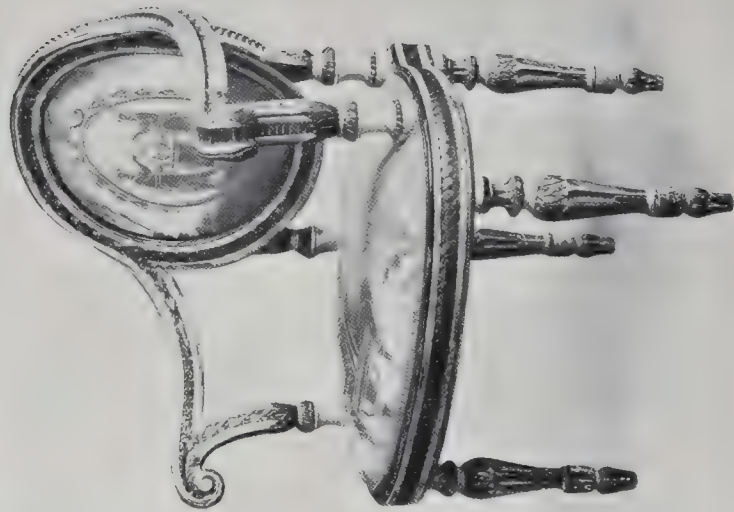


FIG. 372. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. ROME, ABOUT 1788
FROM THE BORGHESI PALACE, ROME

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the foliated scrolls and floral decorations of the lower panel of the mirror, retain the quality of the earlier phase of the style. The background colour is light green and all the motifs in relief are gilded, including the moulds.

In Figure 329 the quality of Venetian design again proves its superiority by comparison. Colour added to exquisite detail and combined with rich marbles distinguishing, as it often does, the finer Venetian tables of this period. Freedom and playfulness pervade the whole design, the delicately carved sprays of yellow wheat,

the little dancing figures *en grisaille* on blue-green grounds encircled by wreaths of naturally coloured flowers giving a gay, rhythmic motion that harmonizes with the semi-circular form. The background is red; the legs, based on the design of those seen in the preceding illustration, are red with flutes and carvings brought out in a soft tone of yellow. The top is of black marble veined with gold.

A valuable document for comparison is the carved wood panel illustrated in Figure 330. This is the finest contemporary expression of Turin.



FIG. 373. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. GENOA, OR ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

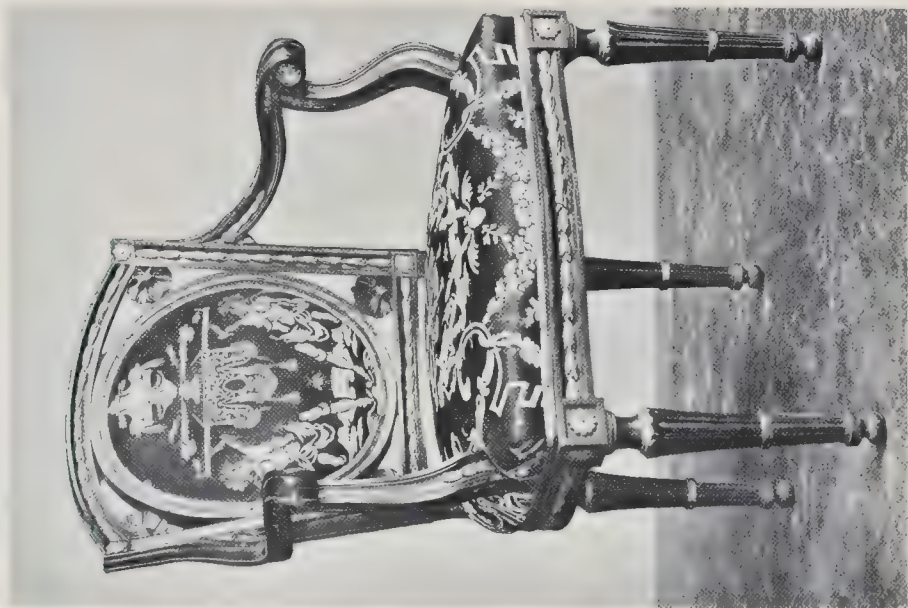


FIG. 374. WALNUT ARM CHAIR WITH GILDED DECORATIONS.

ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY

FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

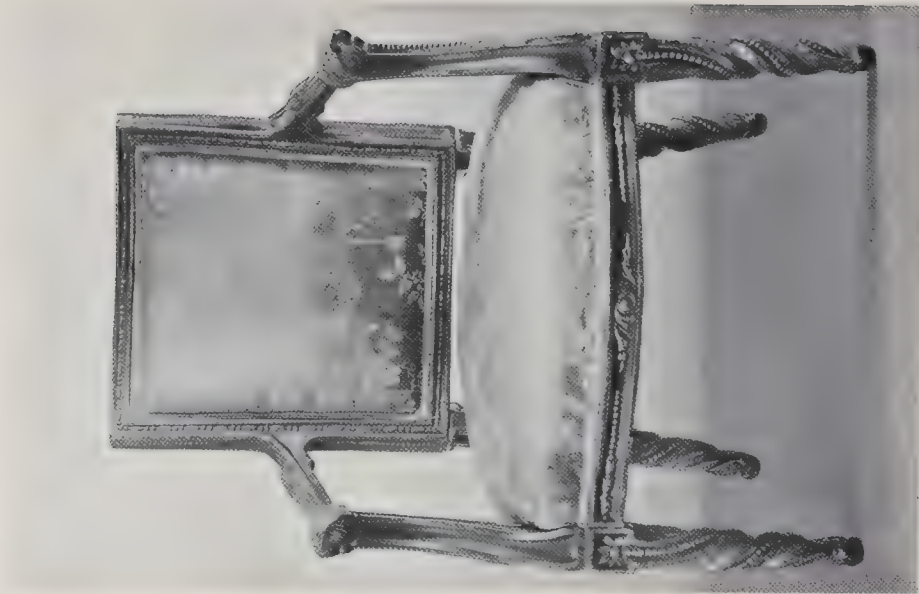


FIG. 375. RED AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. VENETIA,

LATE XVIII CENTURY

COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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It is one of a series of panels from a salon painted green and gold. Though the detail is delicately conceived and exquisitely wrought, still it lacks the freedom and rhythm of the preceding table design and is characterized by a certain dryness that gives an almost brittle expression to the fine detail.

Another fine Venetian table is illustrated in Figure 332. Of identical form, the legs and the treatment of the frieze are varied. Again the background colour is red. On the apron, from the succession of carved arched forms painted yellow, are suspended alternately little baskets of flowers and clusters of grapes showing exquisite detail. These are in naturalistic colours, partly in relief and partly flat. The flutings of the legs are outlined with yellow and the carved and painted decorations are of the same tone.

No better comparison could be made between two highly characteristic expressions, namely those of Rome and Venice, than in the case of Figures 332 and 333. The Roman table (Figure 333) is one of a pair coming from the Borghese Palace. It is entirely gilded, as were the finer representative examples, and has a shaped top of African marble mounted with gilded bronze. The ornament is based on more strictly antique types with a notable absence of the amiable and frivolous motifs of Venice, while the forms are noticeably heavier.

Figure 331 is a varied treatment of the semi-circular table, coming from a northern province, perhaps that of Lombardy. There is a suggestion of Albertolli's design about the decoration of the frieze and the closely drawn sprays of foliage as well as in the use of the eagle, the last-named motif appearing constantly in the designs for the Milanese palaces and the Royal Villa at Monza. These motifs, like the moulds, flutings, and other carved parts, are gilded, and the background is painted a tone of brown. The present background colour was without doubt applied in the nineteenth century, the original being cream or light green. The top is of cream marble.

As has been noted, in nearly all cases wall tables were accompanied by mirrors, but as the *boiserie* and furnishings of the old rooms have been ruthlessly dispersed, odd tables and mirrors, like chairs, settees,

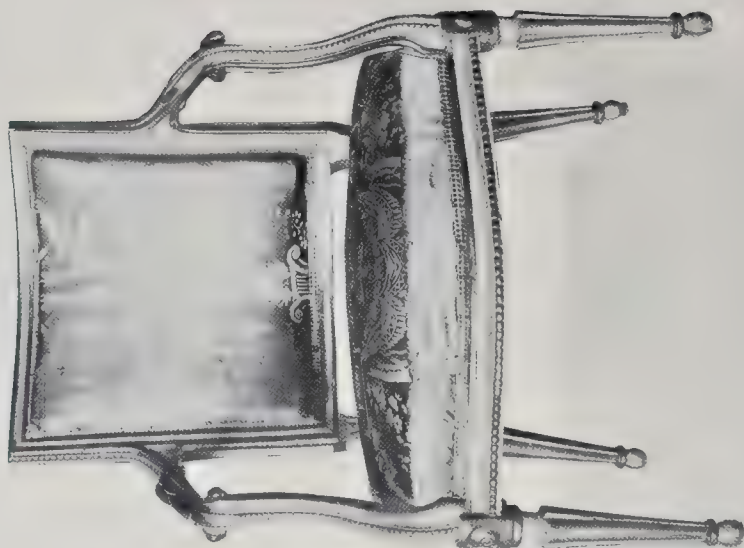


FIG. 376. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY,
LATE XVIII CENTURY

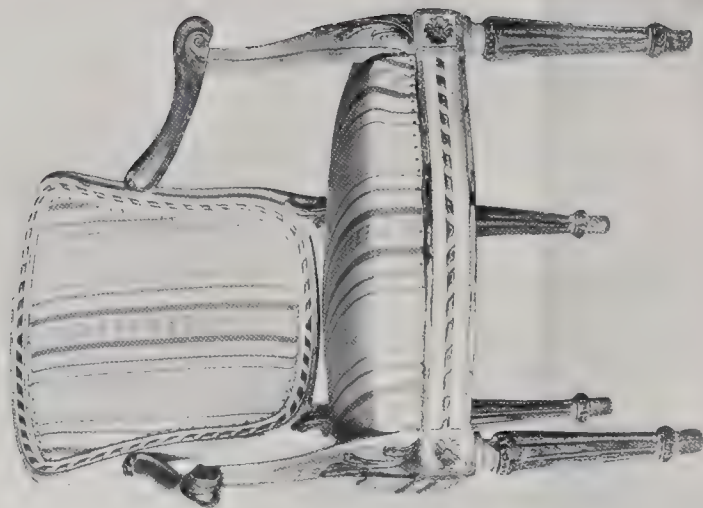


FIG. 377. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1780-90

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ITALIAN FURNITURE

and other furnishings of the important salons, which in this period were designed as a whole scheme of decoration, have found their way to different markets. To the student of this period a mirror of the quality of that illustrated in Figure 336 calls up visions of an exquisite Venetian salon at one of the precious moments in Venetian art. It is one of several

now in the same collection and came originally from the Palazzo Manin at Venice. Light green forms the background colour for the finely carved and gilded decorations.



FIG. 378. CARVED WALNUT STOOL. PIEDMONTE, LATE XVIII CENTURY

Figure 335 is a carved and gilded mirror frame with an insert of black glass painted with a Pompeian border of gold. This is held between simple delicate moulds and is broken by square tablets with carved rosettes. It is crowned by a carved and gilded ribbon bow-knot in the style of Louis XVI. while the whole rests on foliated lion feet. This is an example of Neapolitan work between the years 1775-90 when Louis XVI. and Pompeian styles were sometimes combined in a delightful way. The great collection of paintings, metal and marble statues, urns, vases, and numerous articles of furniture that had been discovered at Pompeii and that were exhibited in the great halls of the king's palace at Portici had already begun to inspire artists and craftsmen with new ideas for ornament. As the century wore on Naples became more and more a centre of a very delightful style. Beginning with 1760 the great change took place, when Spanish gorgeousness began to give place to its antithesis, the Louis XVI. style. There had been little Rococo work of any merit in Naples, the Baroque continuing to flourish up to the time it gave place in a most unnatural way to the pseudo-classic style. There was no delightful transition style here.

Two other mirrors that were once a part of an interior architectural

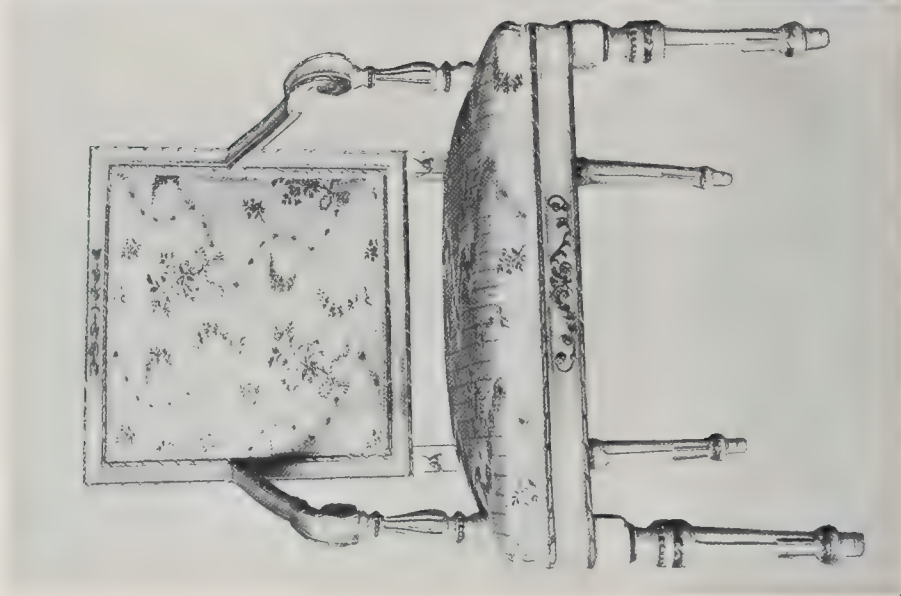


FIG. 379. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. MILAN,
LATE XVIII CENTURY

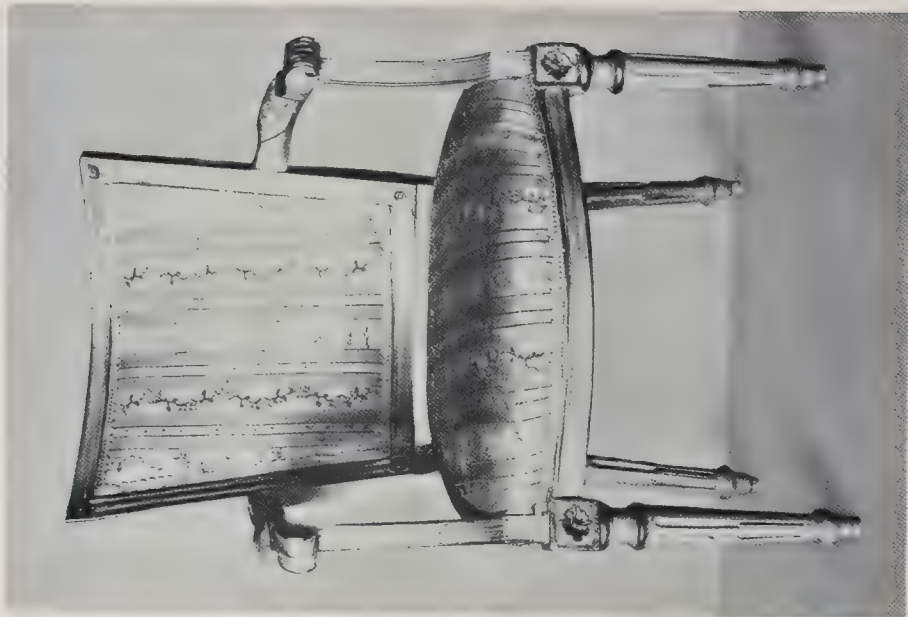


FIG. 380. PAINTED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. MILAN,
LATE XVIII CENTURY

FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

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scheme are shown in Figures 338 and 340. It will be noticed that the Venetian example is an interpretation of the Louis Seize style, while the Roman design harks back to the antique source, both showing the tendencies of these two definite expressions.

Figure 321 is one of a large set of little wall mirrors painted white and gold. From the many old engravings we learn that this was still a favourite way of decorating the walls of small apartments, the cassini, coffee houses, as well as the opera and theatre boxes. Another one of a large set is shown in Figure 367. As a rule these little mirrors had carved wood or wrought metal arms extending from the bottom to hold wax tapers.

There is no doubt that some of the finest Italian furniture of this period, especially that inspired by the style of Louis Seize, is now claimed to be of French origin, especially those pieces that have fallen into the hands of certain antiquaries who know that by thus ascribing them they will command a higher market price. This claim is also the result of a limited knowledge of the later Italian style, it being contemptuously dismissed by many connoisseurs and critics as debased and not worthy of study. The author has knowledge of several cases where the most beautiful and characteristic Italian chairs and settees of the late eighteenth century have been sold as Adam productions or English work contemporary with that master.

An important table in question is that illustrated in Figure 343. In the Wallace collection at London there is a table of identical design, with the exception of slight variations in proportion and small details, that is catalogued "Louis Seize." The table here shown is without doubt Italian work and appears to be an original design based on the style of Louis



FIG. 381. WHITE AND GOLD FOOTSTOOL.
MILAN, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN



FIG. 382. CARVED AND PAINTED ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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XVI., perhaps inspired by Delafosse. It was made for the Borghese villa in the last quarter of the eighteenth century at a time when extensive work was being carried on by the Borghese prince, then the richest nobleman in Rome. W. de Archenholtz, in his "Picture of Italy," written about 1785, informs us that the villa at this time "has been embellished with the rarest sorts of marble in such abundance as was never seen before, and the apartments are full of modern elegance, and gilt à

la Française." The passion for combining marbles and imitation marbles in tables after the manner of the table shown, as well as for executing them entirely in fine antique and modern marbles, was highly characteristic of the Romans. The example illustrated has a top of oriental marble banded with gilded bronze while the legs are inlaid with panels of porphyry. The rams' heads have the character of Piranesi interpretations, while the heavy



FIG. 383. CARVED AND PAINTED ARM CHAIR. TURIN,
LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

ITALIAN FURNITURE

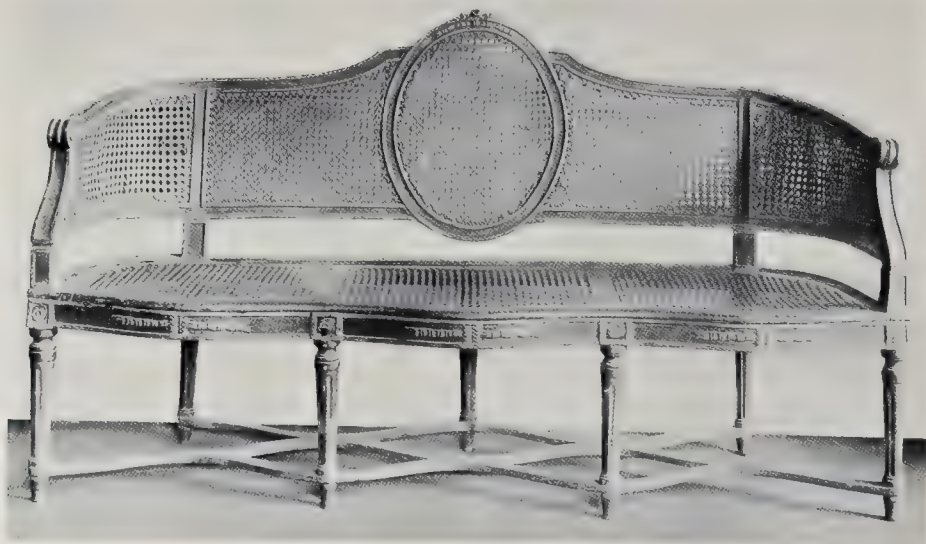


FIG. 384. PAINTED SETTEE. VENETIAN, ABOUT 1775-80
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

garlands suspended from them, though abounding in the designs of Delafosse, have the exact drawing of those seen ornamenting the other Borghese tables of highly representative Italian design seen in Figures 320 and 345.

Attributions are made difficult to support by the fact that few Italian master craftsmen or decorators of this period have left authoritative documents in the form of engraved designs as in the case of the French masters. For this reason the drawings, both edited and unedited, of Albertolli—the Vignola of the eighteenth century—are of the greatest importance, especially in the study of Lombard furniture and decoration during the last quarter of the century. Though as early as 1770 Albertolli had gained a certain recognition by the stucco decorations he did at the Villa di Poggio for the court of Tuscany, and his coöperation with Carlo Vanvitelli, two years later, in that master's ambitious work at Naples, it was not until after his return to Milan in 1774 that his popularity began. About this time he was asked by Piermarini to design the interiors for the Royal Palace at

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FIG. 385. SIDE CHAIRS ACCOMPANYING FIGURE 384

Milan that he was then building, resulting in some of the finest expression of his style. From then he became the fashion at Milan where in many of the great houses he altered old rooms, often covering heavily and richly ornamented ceilings of the seventeenth century with those of stucco modelled in a lighter classical manner. After this success he accompanied Piermarini to Monza where he did his most renowned work, designing not only architectural features, wall and ceiling decorations, but furniture and hangings as well.

More important still is his connection with the Brera Academy at Milan where from its foundation in 1776 until his retirement in 1812 he was one of its leading figures. Through his work at this excellent institution his influence was far reaching, his "Corso Elementari di 'Ornamenti di Architettonici'" being the basis of decorative design for many years in the

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principal Italian art schools. In 1787 he made a collection of his drawings, for the benefit of students at the Brera, which included a wealth of architectural detail, ornament, and design for furniture.

The console table and mirror illustrated in Figure 356 if not by Albertolli is of that school. The general design of the whole as well as the detail of the decoration betray the hand of this master. The carved deco-

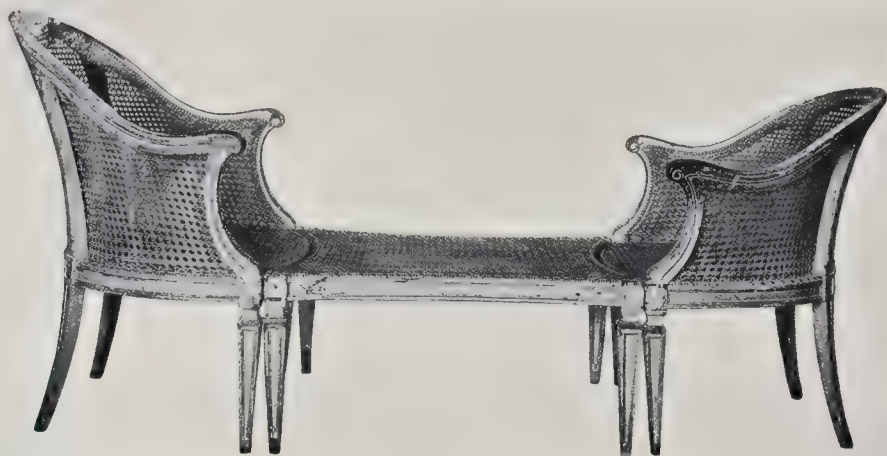


FIG. 386. BLUE AND GOLD CHAISE LONGUE. PIEDMONTE, OR LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

rations of the frieze are drawn in his style, while female heads of this character occur often in his designs for the decorations of the Royal Palace at Milan. Albertolli used two distinct types of foliage, one the rather closely drawn acanthus scroll and the other a stiff and open variety of the type ornamenting the mirror frame. Though not characteristic of his style, a few of the more amiable and frivolous motifs occasionally appear in his work, such as the little basket of flowers and the ribbon bow-knot seen at the top of the mirror. The eagle, a symbol of Lombardy, carved on the centre tablet of the table frieze is drawn in a familiar Albertolli way. The colour scheme is blue and gold, the top of the table is marble. Figure 351 is also

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a Lombardy type, perhaps Milanese, and is of the School of Albertoli. While it has no direct relation to the few designs of furniture left by Albertoli, yet it incorporates many motifs seen in his decorations. This delicate, profuse, and dry ornamentation is rarely met with elsewhere, the reverse being true of the preponderance of Italian work.

Figure 342 is a semi-circular form that may be included in the

same category. Variety without accent is more apparent. A peculiar combination of running ornament is displayed on the members that outline the panels of the frieze. The legs are less disturbed but based on the same design as those of the two preceding ones. Few tables of this school are found in the colour scheme of this figure, which is red and gold, red being the background colour while the ornament is in gold. It is extremely doubtful if this is the original colour as this type of table was either white and gold or entirely gilded. In the early years of the nineteenth century, when the Empire style was at its height and when mahogany and cherry wood came into fashion, the Italians painted many of the earlier classical pieces in mahogany-red to harmonize with the new acquisitions.

Figure 350 is an original Venetian red and gold scheme. At Venice



FIG. 387. WALNUT DESK CHAIR. EMILIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

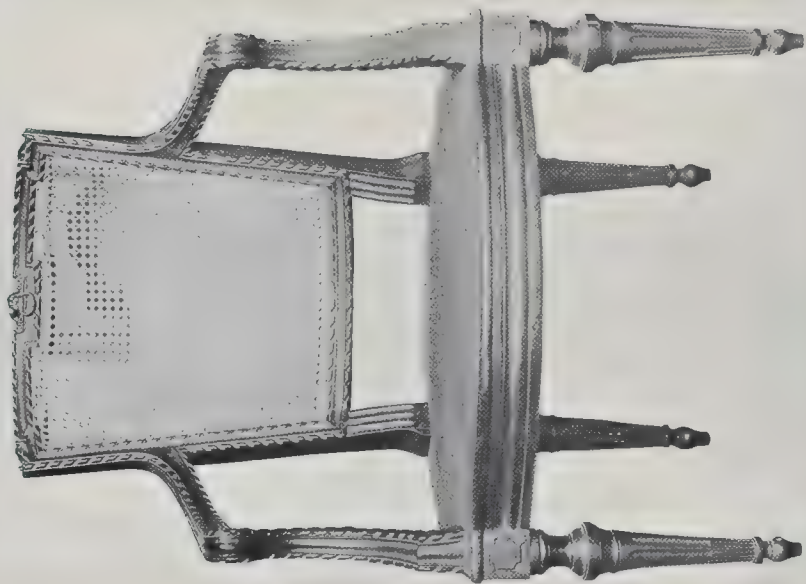


FIG. 388. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LIGURIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF CHARLES A. PLATT, F.S.Q., NEW YORK CITY

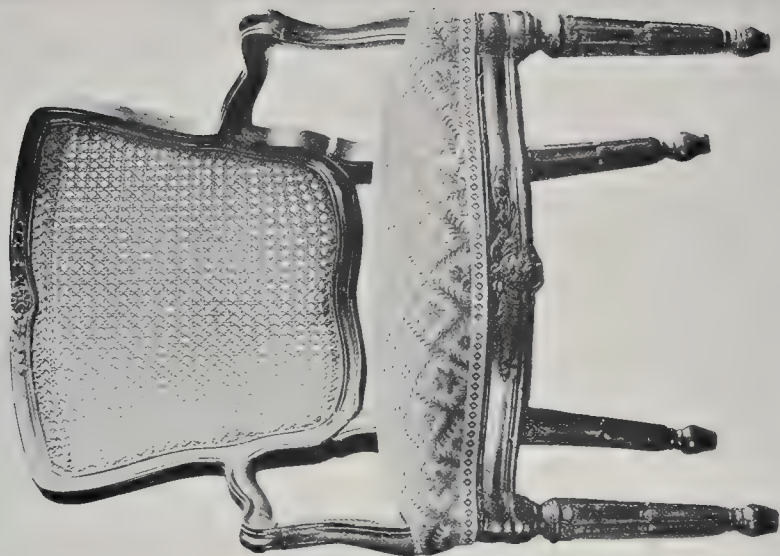


FIG. 389. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. EMILIA, ABOUT 1775
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

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the cold, harsh white and gold schemes were less popular than those of green, blue, red, and yellow, each combined with gold, and those in which varied hues were combined. Venetian forms were often fanciful as their colour, as Figure 350 proves. The twisted legs are red with gold leaves in relief, the drawers have panels of lacquer with little Chinese figures in landscape that have no scale relation to the other motifs, and the top of black marble is decorated with a design of inlay.

Chairs of this period are as numerous as they are varied in style, ranging from the formal Italian Louis Seize type, gilded, with covers of needlework and brocade, to the open splat back variety with rush-bottomed seats. In the earlier part of the period the Louis Seize

models were treated with much freedom and originality. These are generally heavier than the French models and show such peculiar traits of design as are illustrated in the two pieces shown in Figures 371 and 372. Both are from Roman palaces and have frames elaborately carved and entirely gilded.

Two more of the heavier models inspired directly by French examples are seen in Figures 371 and 372. The first named is a Neapolitan chair painted white with ornament in gold. As one of the more exaggerated specimens it illustrates the coarser manner in which the Italians expressed details; for example, the fluting of the legs and the scale of the acanthus carving on the arms. Another peculiarity of many of these chairs is the heaviness of the frame compared with the general proportions. This is shown in the vigorous model with bold sweeping arms and elliptical back



FIG. 390. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. [EMILIA,
OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1790
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC.,
NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 391. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1785
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO.

of work common to Milan between the years 1770-80, just before Albertolli had established the true pseudo-classic style of Lombardy. As in the preceding figure and in many other chairs of this type the arms show a variety of treatment and are without arm pads. Another point is the omission of the tablet with a carved rosette where the legs join the seat rail, this being

illustrated in Figure 372. The form of the seat, the lower part of the back and the arm supports, as well as the structural relation of the legs to the seat are all peculiar to Italian design.

Figure 375 illustrates the fantastic treatment sometimes given to the Louis Seize chair by the Venetian designers. In this case the legs and arms are of bizarre design. Painted red with gold decorations, it is by no means an uncommon treatment of Venetian work of this class, the twisted legs like those of rustic design being often found in the Venetian villas.

A more conservative chair of the "Italian Louis Seize" period is shown in Figure 379. It has the appearance

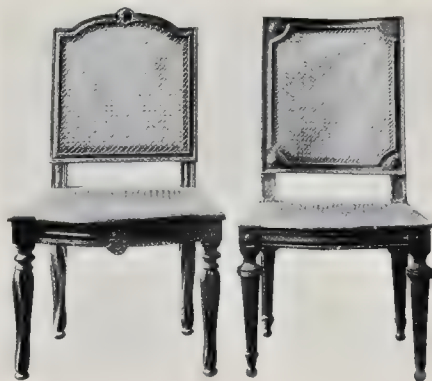


FIG. 392. WALNUT SIDE CHAIRS. EMILIA,
ABOUT 1780-90
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC.

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a very uncommon occurrence in the work of contemporary French designers.

A simplified version of Figure 376 is shown in Figure 380. More peculiarities of Italian design appear in the first named in the placing of the tablet on the rounded corners of the seat rail and in the way the fluting of the legs cuts through the upper part without being finished with a mould or stop. The arms are modifications of those seen in Figure 375. The damask of the back and seat seems to be the original covering.

Perhaps one of the most distinguishing characteristics of earlier Italian work of this period is the lack of fine scale relation evident in contemporary French work. This is especially true of copies of Louis Seize chairs, but in the more original Italian style of the late eighteenth century this defect was largely overcome, a consistency in scale as well as design being

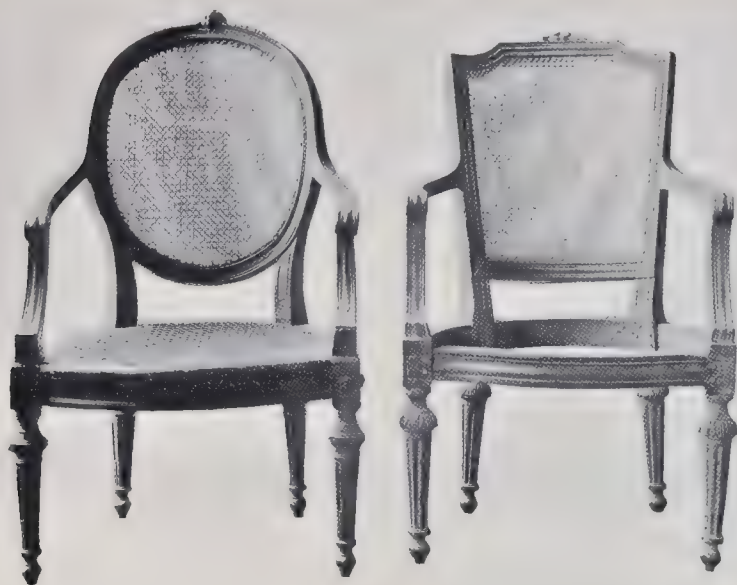


FIG. 393. WALNUT ARM CHAIRS. LIGURIA, OR EMILIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 394. PAINTED SOFA. EMILIA, LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

evident. In the simpler examples of the "Italian Louis Seize" the discrepancy of scale relation often results in quaintness, while in the more sumptuous examples its effect is grotesque. In Figure 377 the seat, the legs, and the arms show a consistency that contrasts with the scale of the back. There is something of earlier tradition—that so often persists—in



FIG. 395. WALNUT SOFA. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. F. K. WAINWRIGHT, BRYN MAWR, PENN.

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the design of the arm supports. In this and the accompanying example the arm pads are omitted.

Illustrated in Figure 380 is a white and gold arm chair following a late Louis Seize model. With all its simplicity and niceness of design two Italian tendencies are shown, namely the relation of the tablet to the width of the seat rail and the arm support, and the curved ending of the arm. These smaller and more comfortable arm chairs are an indication of smaller and more livable apartments



FIG. 396. WALNUT CHAIR. VENETIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF CHARLES A. PLATT, ESQ.,
NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 397. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. TUSCANY, LATE XVIII CENTURY

—the drawing-room and boudoir. In France beginning with the reign of Louis XV. small rooms of more private nature such as the with-drawing room and boudoir had been established. With the Italians this type of room was never rightly understood unless, perhaps, in Lombardy and to a certain degree at Venice in the latter part of the century. In no sense can the Italian

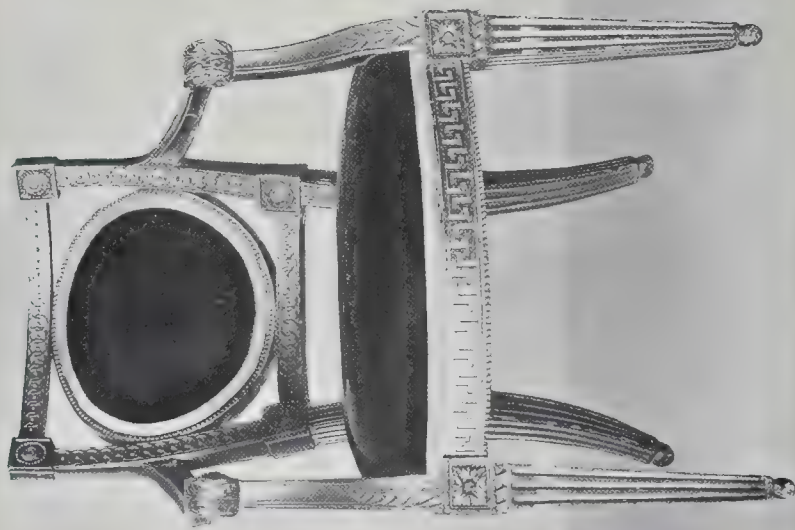


FIG. 398. CARVED AND GILDED ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1800
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN



FIG. 399. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. TUSCANY, END OF THE
XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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drawing-room or boudoir be compared with that of France, yet in the north of Italy there were the drawing-rooms of the Countess Castiglione at Milan, the Marchesa Silva Verra at Verona, the Countess Grismondi at Brescia, and the lovely Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, at Venice, all known to-day to have been real salons of the most intimate character where society met with the geniuses of the age. In the quieter, smaller towns of the north there were also to be found a few salons with furniture arranged in an intimate way for comfort and social intercourse. To these we are indebted for much quaint and original furniture.

A small drawing-room chair of uncommon delicacy of design, showing a strong feeling of the Adam style, is illustrated in Figure 383. As in France, so in Italy, there was in the second half of the eighteenth century an era of Anglo-mania. Since the first years of the century the influence of England was evident in certain localities. In literature Milton, Pope, and Addison were

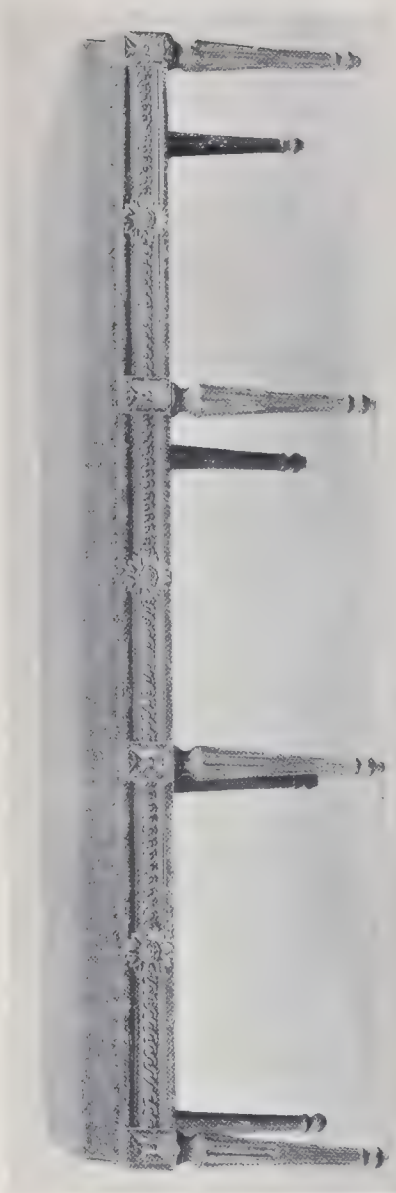


FIG. 400. PAINTED BENCH. VENICE, THE LAST QUARTER OF THE XVIII CENTURY.
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

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known to not a few Italians, whose works they undoubtedly impressed, notably those of Baretti and Gozzi, while Richardson's novels are said to have suggested plots for Goldoni. However, the real intellectual and artistic intercourse between Italy and England began after 1750, when the

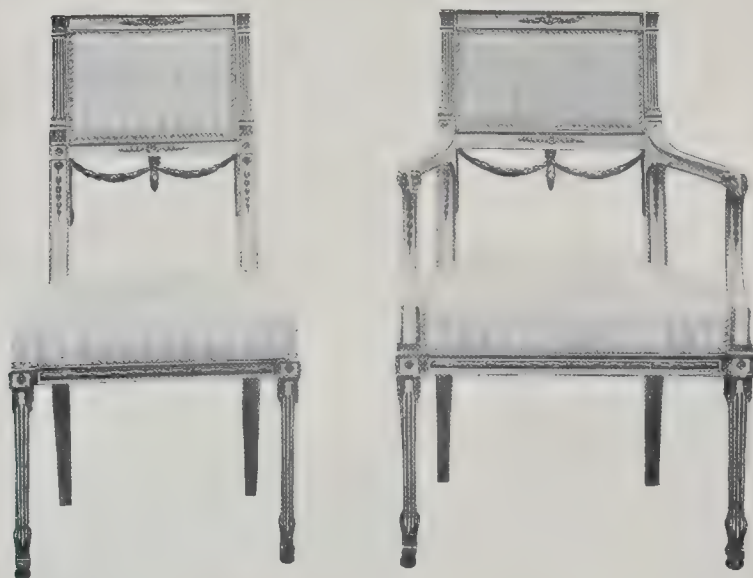


FIG. 401. BLUE AND GOLD CHAIRS. NAPLES, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF LEONE RICCI, NEW YORK CITY

English came to Italy in great numbers, and the Italians began to go to England for education. It was no doubt through the Italians residing in England that more definite ideas of English life and art reached Italy, for though, as Goethe says, the English carried their tea kettles up Mt. Etna with them, they came to Italy for art and antiquity and not for propaganda.

Nor did the English only come on the "Grand Tour." Many resided permanently in Italy; many brought their household furnishings with them, pieces of which are still picked up in Italy to-day. Besides the host of

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English residing at Leghorn there were numerous families at Naples, Rome, and Florence. Horace Mann in one of his letters refers to an English duchess to whom the Pope had shown every attention, offering to be her agent in the purchase of the Villa Negroni at Rome. She proposes, he says, "To take her own ships with the furniture of two or three villas in England to furnish the casino which Sixtus Quintus inhabited, and by that means to add to the noble monuments of antiquity (which she is to purchase, too) that adorn that extensive villa, all the elegance and convenience of English modern furniture."



FIG. 402. BLUE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. LOMBARDY,
LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. J. BORDEN HARRIMAN

Returning to the discussion of the chair illustrated in Figure 383, it might be said that it is an Italian interpretation or copy of a late eighteenth century English design that was made for an interior in the style of the Adam brothers. It is evident that the designer had seen the English model, for many of the Italian chairs in the English style, especially the Chippendale and open back varieties, have a peculiar proportion common to products copied from unmeasured drawings or engravings. It is uncertain

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whether this was copied from a chair brought to Italy, or done by one of the numerous Italian designers working with Adam, on their return to Italy, but the last supposition is more likely.

Italian furniture in the Adam, Sheraton, or Hepplewhite style is even more easily distinguished from the original than pieces in the Louis Seize style. The Italians were greater imitators of style than of technique. As the prevailing quality of English furniture is its superb craftsmanship and that of Italy a total absence of the same, a wide gulf is breached between the two national productions. That is not to say that the finest French furniture does not rank with English furniture in that regard, but the technique of French design is transcended by style, which is more sympathetic to the Italian temperament. In materials as well as technique the Italian work cannot be compared to that of the English. In English work mahogany was the generally used wood, with some satin wood. The execution of the interior parts and the materials employed were as fine as those of

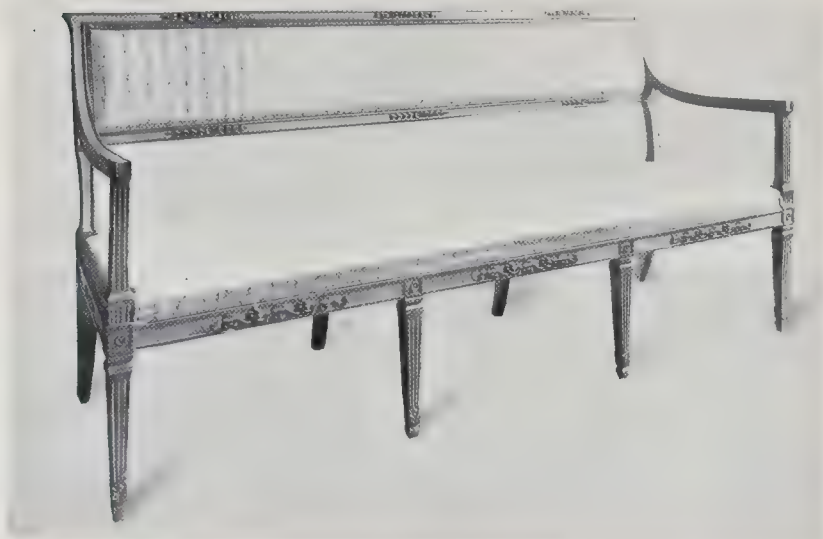


FIG. 403. WHITE AND GOLD SETTEE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY

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the exterior; mahogany, oak, and cedar were used, and drawers and doors fit with perfect precision. These qualities are generally absent in Italian furniture. Equally comparative are the English pieces decorated with painted designs, which as a rule were worked on foundations of mahogany with an enamel paint known in those days as Japan. Though the designs in the style of Piranesi were prepared by Italian artists, the different mediums used produce a totally different appearance from that of Italian furni-

ture in the same style. Owing to the materials employed by the English these pieces are to-day in an excellent state of preservation, contrasting sadly with the condition of the more beautiful and delicate texture of the Italian pieces.

A few drawing-rooms and boudoirs may have existed with comfortable arm chairs arranged for conversation, but these were small in number



FIG. 404. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. PART OF THE SET TO WHICH FIG. 403 BELONGS

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY

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compared with the large salons, ballrooms, and great halls that were supplied with new furniture. In these large formal rooms chairs, still more ornamental than comfortable, were generally arranged against the walls with settees,



FIG. 405. RED AND GOLD CHAPEL CHAIRS. LIGURIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

benches, and stools, as in former times, in nearly all instances these being designed *en suite*. Many of the benches similar to that illustrated in Figure 400 are especially worthy of note. This was one of a set and was without doubt accompanied by settees, chairs, and console tables in the same style.



FIG. 406. BLUE AND GOLD ARM CHAIR. MODENA, END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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Being a Venetian design it is as usual of highly decorative colour, painted yellow with decorations of red and green – a favourite Venetian scheme.

Italian palaces are often justly criticized for their lack of comfort, but when we consider how little these were used in some sections of Italy, it

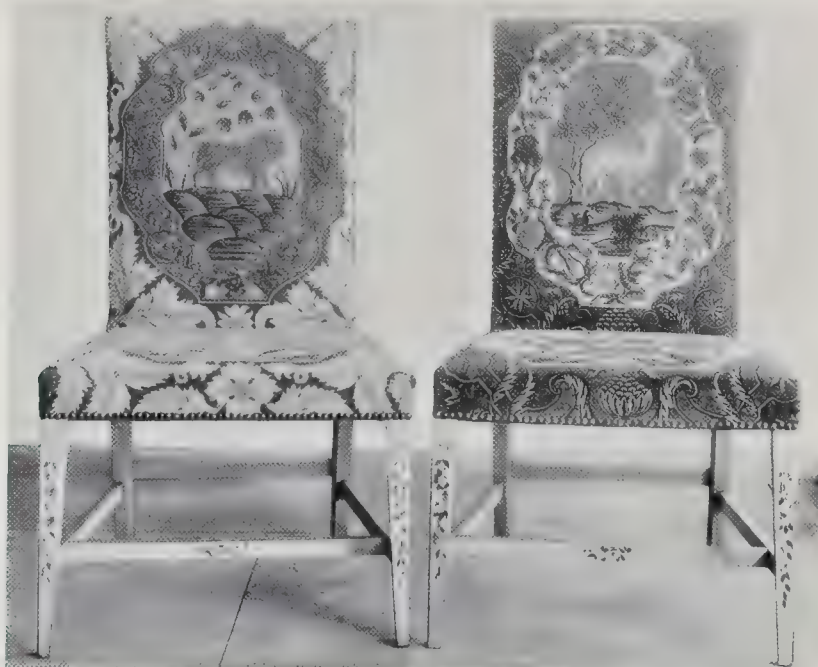


FIG. 407. PAINTED SIDE CHAIRS WITH NEEDLE WORK COVERS. VENICE, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRISCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

is not surprising. For example, the Venetians were at their villas about half the year, and when in town they were in their casini, theatre and opera boxes. Then, too, the Italian climate is conducive to out-of-door living. The large halls and ballrooms of the palaces were used principally for weddings, musicales, and large formal entertainments at which the great throngs stood or else seated themselves on chairs and benches that lined the walls. The Romans and Neapolitans had a passion for these large, magnificent parties. To them the intellectual and more private social intercourse of some parts

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of northern Italy was practically unknown. This accounts for the absence of the smaller drawing-room and more comfortable furniture in a finer style from these sections.

A type of chair that was much in evidence in the eighteenth century



FIG. 408. PART OF THE SET OF WHICH TWO ARE ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 407

and one that may be called the Italian *bergère* is illustrated in Figures 396 and 397. These were used largely for boudoir chairs; in many old engravings of the period ladies are seen seated in them at their dressing tables. (See Figure 277.) They are often low, ample, and comfortable and as a rule of simple design with moulded frames and square tapering legs panelled, fluted, or plain. Figure 396 is one with beautiful detail displayed in the graceful moulded frame of the back, and arms ending in front with a foliated carving, and in a carved tablet where the legs join the seat rail.

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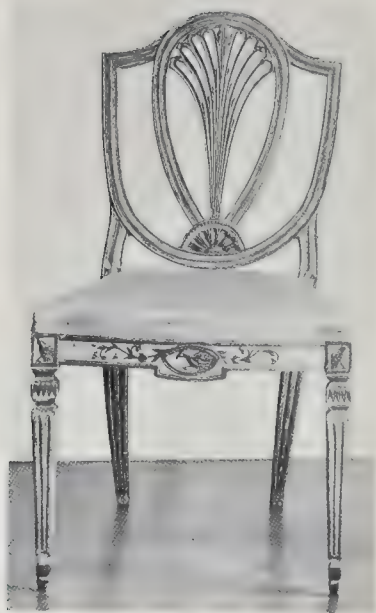


FIG. 409. WHITE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1790
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. HOWARD CUSHING,
NEW YORK CITY

orange berries. The fluted legs are yellow and green. Because of the rather high seat frame, the original upholstery was without the loose cushion.

The true Italian style expressed at its best is seen in the blue and gold arm chair illustrated in Figure 406. This is one of a set of four from some pretty drawing-room in the north central part of Italy, perhaps at Modena or Bologna, in the last years of the century when certain influences were

It is upholstered with a loose cushion of a type that was occasionally used, and retains its original brown leather covering.

More elaborate in detail is the painted sofa of similar form illustrated in Figure 394. The moulded frame of the back and the rail of the seat are carved with banded leaves; these are painted a yellow-cream, the moulds are green, and among the leaves are red-

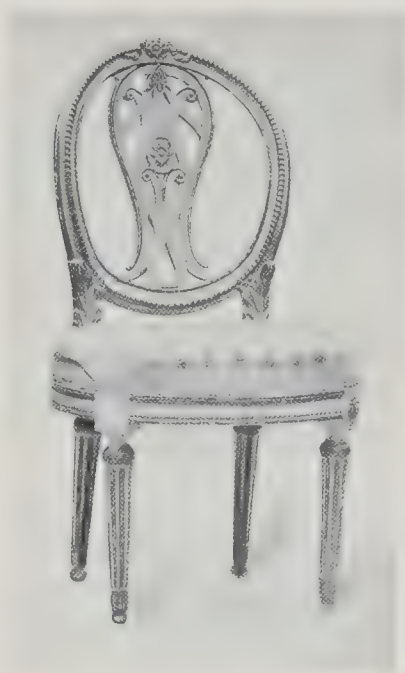


FIG. 410. BLUE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. NATHANIEL B. POTTER,
NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 411. PAINTED SOFA. VENICE, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

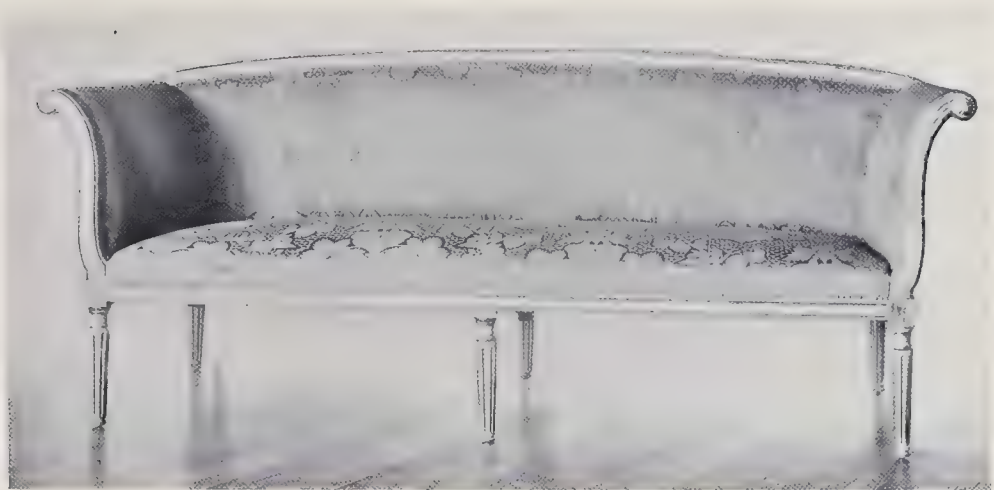


FIG. 412. GREEN AND GOLD SOFA. LIGURIA, OR EMILIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF FRANK ALVAH PARSONS, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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bringing about their varied changes. Though it is comparable to the Directoire work in France, it is unfair, not to say unintelligent, to class the simple Italian products of this period of Italian art as "Italian Directoire,"



FIG. 413. PAINTED SIDE CHAIRS ACCOMPANYING THE SOFA ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 411

when the French style was largely influenced by the development of the Italian classical style. Then, too, when compared to that of France, the Italian style covers a much longer period, beginning with the work of Piranesi and persisting to a certain extent, making the "Italian Empire" more charming. As in much of the late eighteenth century Italian work, a perfect consistency, not often found in the "Italian Louis Seize" products, distinguishes the chair under discussion. The somewhat heavy frame is with simple mouldings brought out in gold. Original covers of light blue damask, delightfully designed, add greatly to the interest of these chairs.

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Again the practise of nice simplicity, for which the Italian designers of this period were too rarely credited, is portrayed in the set of eight side chairs illustrated in Figures 407 and 408. Frames of simple rectangular

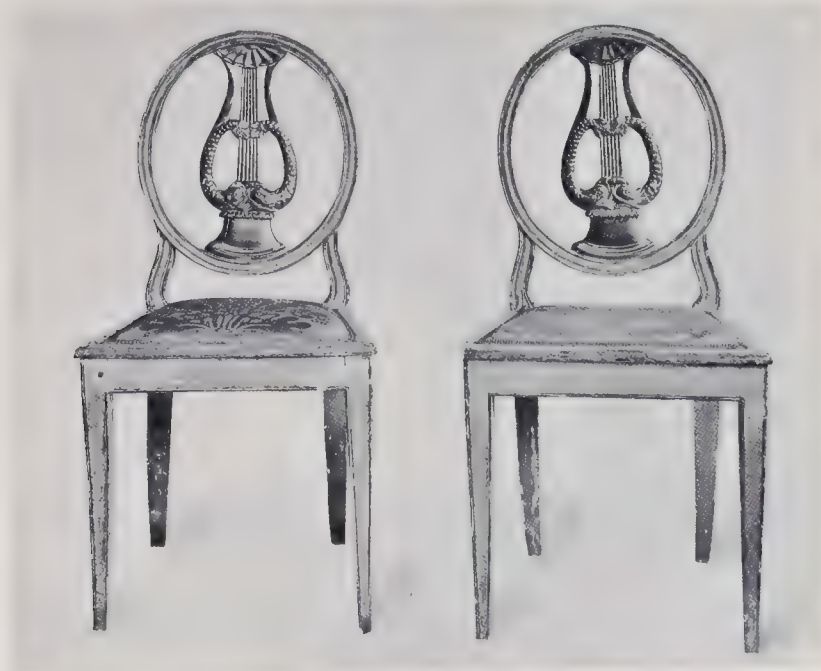


FIG. 414. BLUE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIRS. VENICE, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY

structure, painted light green with a foliage decoration of darker green, have covers of rare Venetian needle-work of unusually light and gay colouring. Though the Italians excelled in the art of needle-work the preponderance of their effort has always been devoted to ecclesiastical work. In spite of this fact covers for chairs, hangings of beds, and panels for screens were often made of exquisite design and colouring. Few Italian chairs were covered with tapestry, for tapestry weaving was an art in which the Italians were never profuse or especially skilled, yet at Venice the looms of Antonio Dini produced work of high quality. The seats and

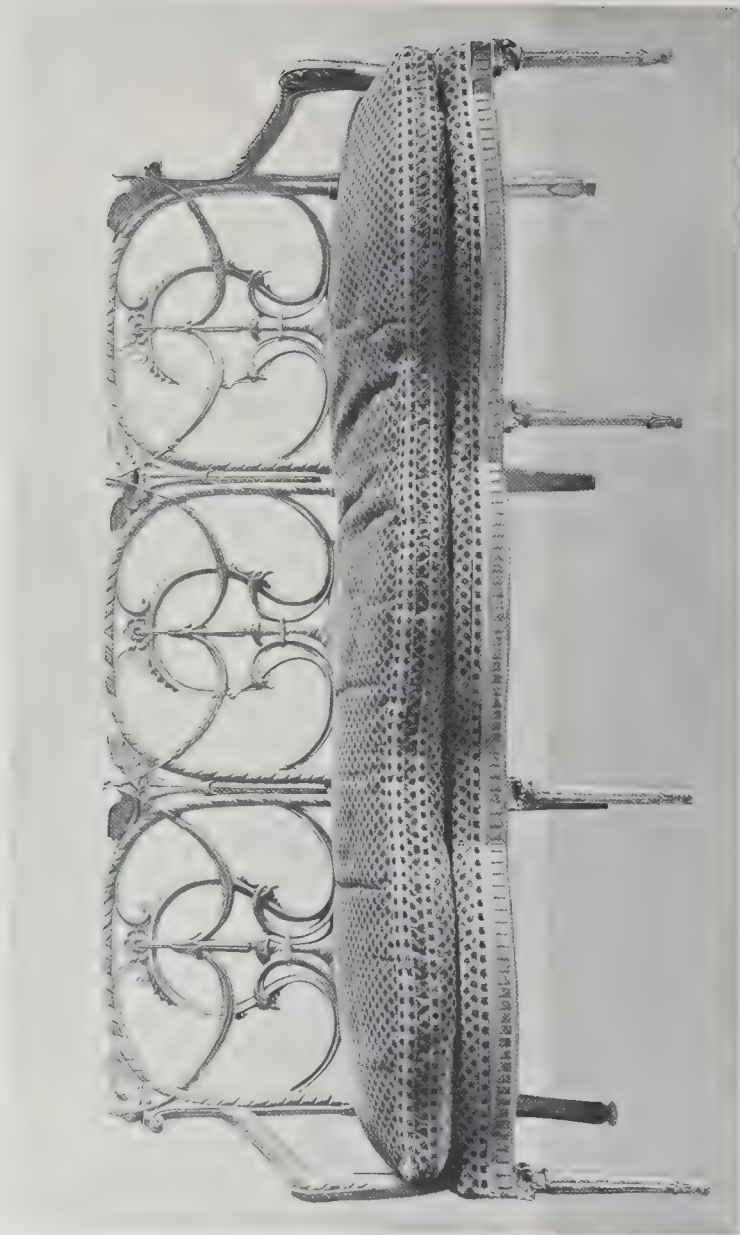


FIG. 415. PAINTED SETTEE. VENICE, ABOUT 1780
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JOHN INNESS KANE, NEW YORK CITY

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backs of the twelve arm chairs in the Museo Civico at Venice and the carpet in the Church of the Fava are well-known works from his looms.

Both needle-work and tapestry were, however, used in small proportion for furniture covering as compared with silk, brocades, velvets, and damasks—fabrics made in considerable quantities in several parts of Italy. In Venice alone during the middle of the century there were eight hundred looms employing twelve thousand weavers. Yet in

spite of these facts, the craze for French fashions had by the last decade of the century so greatly decreased the silk industries of Italy, that in 1792 only sixty Venetian looms were at work, with one hundred weavers.

And this craze for French silks was not confined to Venice, we read in old documents of the demand for Lyons silk throughout Italy. In a publication of the eighteenth century the following description is given of an apartment in the Palazzo Barberini at Rome as it was in the year 1770:



FIG. 416. ARM CHAIR ACCOMPANYING THE SETTEE ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 415
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JOHN INNESS KANE, NEW YORK CITY

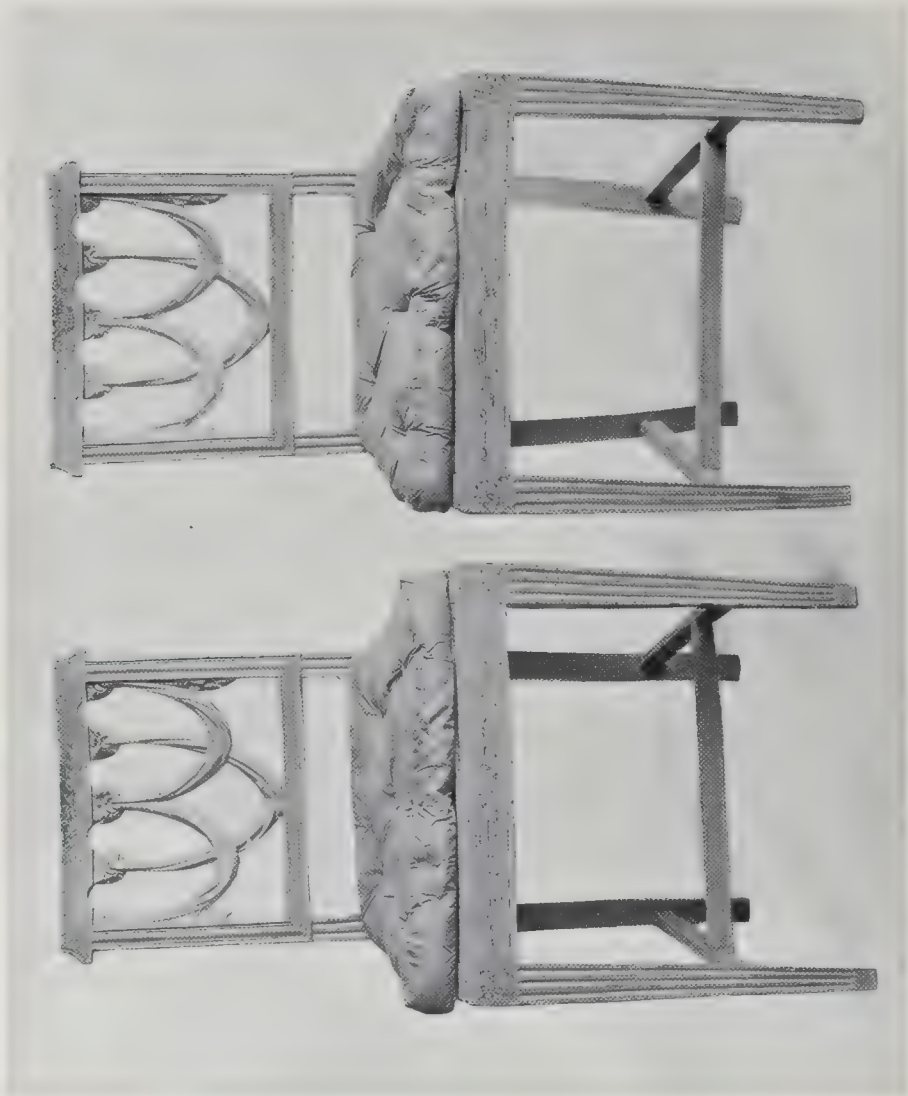


FIG. 417. BLUE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIRS. VENICE, ABOUT 1780-90
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES S. CUSHMAN, NEW YORK CITY

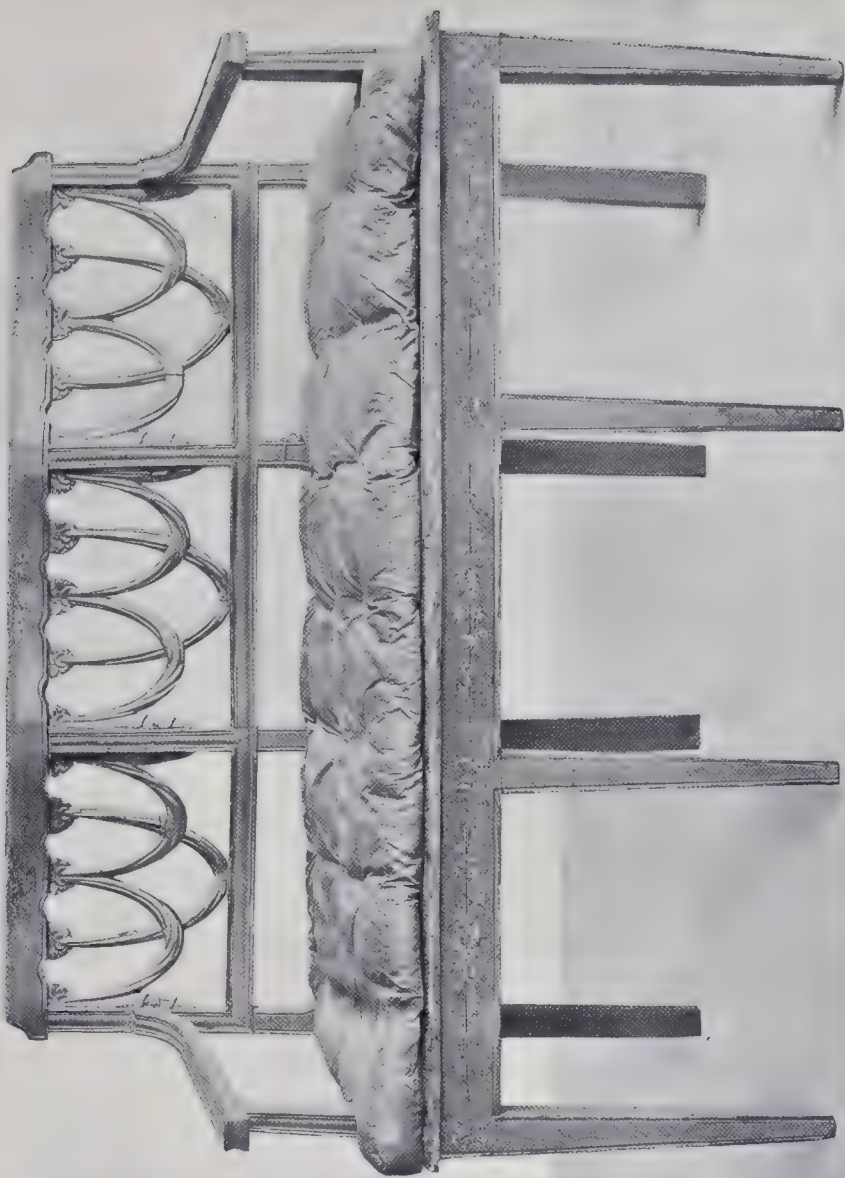


FIG. 418. SETTEE ACCOMPANYING THE CHAIRS ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 417
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES S. CUSHMAN, NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 419. PAINTED SETTEE. VENICE, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE TOLENTINO GALLERIES OF NEW YORK AND ROME

"The apartment inhabited by the Duchess of Montelibretti is nobly furnished in the Italian style. Some of the finest pictures in the collection are its decorations; but the rooms are not crowded with them, as is frequently the case in Italian palaces. Her bed-chamber is extremely pretty; it is hung with a Lyons silk, brocaded with small flowers, and striped with silver, which has an exceeding good effect; the chairs, curtains, etc., are all covered with the same materials."

Chairs and settees designed with open backs are by far the most numerous and characteristic of the original Italian style, the models with upholstered backs being more frequently derived from the Louis Seize style. Of the former, many representative examples are illustrated. Figures 415 and 416, of the highest order, are among the delicate, rhythmic products that through sheer ignorance of the Venetian style have

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been attributed to the Adam brothers. Not only their craftsmanship, but their every detail recalls the Italian-Piranesi style, as it was derived from the "Diverse Maniere." Characteristics of Italian design are expressed in the method of painting and their general colour scheme, the technique of the carving, the rather widely separated flutes of the seat rail, and the drawing of the legs. Then the scale and form of the arms, the conception of the birds supporting the swags, and the general composition of the backs are decidedly Italian to the student of this period. These pieces show the finest Italian technique, detail being treated, as a rule, in a broader manner.



FIG. 420. ARM CHAIR. ACCOMPANYING SETTEE ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 419

The Italian-Piranesi style should be designated in order to distinguish it from the so-called Adam-Piranesi style. It is also well to refer to their relation. Robert and James Adam, like Rousseau and Dugourc, studied in Italy after the archaeological activities were well under way. Robert Adam left for Italy in 1754 and immediately after his return to England in 1760 began his architectural career. While in Italy he was an ardent devotee of classical research, having been made a member of the Academy of San Luca at Rome, the School of Design at Florence, and the Institute at Bologna, in recognition of his work at Spalato. Though from the first a new note was more vividly struck in the work of Adam than in that of the Louis Seize masters, the preponderance of elements are of Georgian, Palladian, and Renaissance antiquity. This is especially true of the ar-

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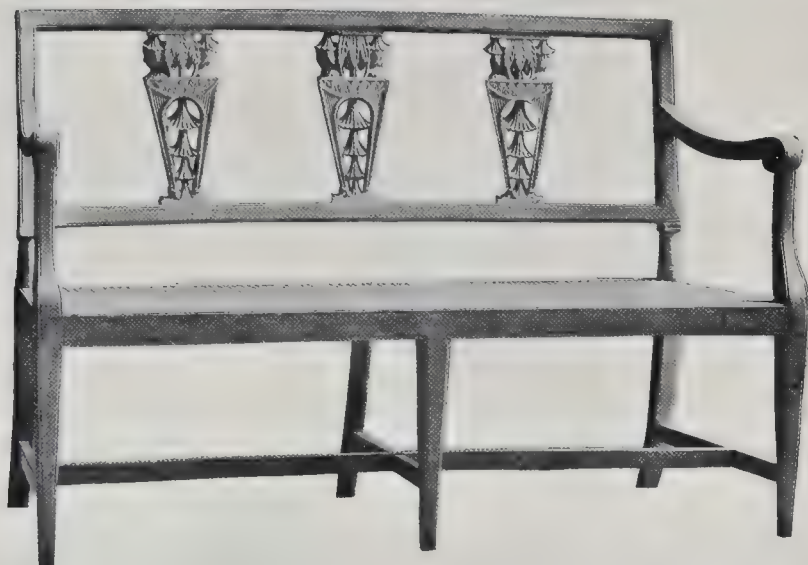


FIG. 421. PAINTED SETTEE. LOMBARDY, OR VENETIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF WILLIAM T. GRANT, ESQ., PELHAM, NEW YORK

chitecture, but the chief concern is with the decorative work and furniture of Adam Brothers, because of its Italian origin.

However, from about 1775, or within a few years of the date of Dugourc's work at Bagatelle and the decorations of Rousseau at Fontainebleau, the new classical element, suggesting the same source, became more evident in the work of Adam. This was no doubt brought about by the numerous Italians, trained in the new classical school of Italy, who were working under Adam's supervision. Angelica Kaufmann who first came to England about 1766 was soon followed by Piranesi, Pergolesi, Cipriani, and Zucchi, who in a sense may be called the authors of the decoration and furniture of Adam Brothers. The first part of Pergolesi's "Designs for Various Ornaments" was published in London during the year 1777 and as Mr. Swarbrick claims in his work on Robert Adam and his brother, "In these illustrations many characteristics of the style introduced by the brothers

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Adam may be observed. Pergolesi like Cipriani, Angelica Kaufmann, Zucchi, and Rebecca, devoted a considerable part of his time to painting furniture and other decorative work," in the manner then so prevalent in Italy.

Two years previously another Italian had published designs in England in the manner of the Adam brothers. This was Pietro Columbani, of whom very little is known other than his publication of two quarto volumes of designs. The first of these, issued in 1775, was entitled "A New Book of Ornaments" and the second, which followed a year later, was known as "A Variety of Capitals." While these publications were no doubt of great assistance to Adam, they can in no way be compared to the important part the works of Piranesi played in forming the Adam brothers' decorative style. As Mr. Samuel in his "Piranesi" has said: "From what has of late been learnt about Piranesi's connection with Robert Adam and the group of artists who surrounded him, it may now be said, with some show of truth, that the style of decoration, and more particularly in the case of furniture, associated with Adam's name may be better described as 'Piranesi' than 'Adam.' Both, of course, were ardent admirers of the Classic and drew their ideas from that one common source; but Piranesi's etchings, the outcome of his devotion to the Antique, were the vehicle by which, at that time, fresh phrases of design and detail were conveyed to Adam's mind, and it may be asserted with some degree of certainty that, but for the means provided by Piranesi's genius, Adam's reputation to-day would not be as high as it actually is." Even Mr. Percy Macquoid in his

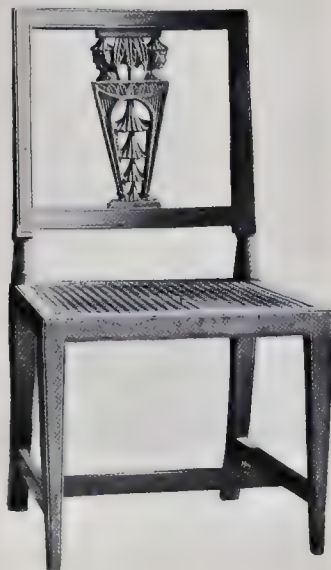


FIG. 422. SIDE CHAIR ACCOMPANYING SETTEE ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 421

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FIG. 423. BLUE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
VENICE, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY

history of English furniture, "The Age of Satinwood," admits that "In comparing the designs of Piranesi and Adam it is at once apparent how the former originated and the latter improved and adapted the Italian style to English requirements. There are pages of Piranesi's drawings that Adam produced fearlessly as his own, enlarging and simplifying the details of the originals."

It might be supposed that this association between the great English stylist of the eighteenth century and the Italian masters would create confusion in distinguishing the two styles, yet the greatest difference exists not only in the craftsmanship but in the actual materials used. Then, too, the amount of this English furniture in the Italian style is small in proportion to that in the style of Hepplewhite, Sheraton, and their contemporaries. These last-named styles are more thoroughly English and influenced to a considerable extent the Italian furniture in the vicinity of Livorno, as is seen in Figures 428, 429, 431, and 436. The interplay of ideas, referred to previously, was indeed more general than is commonly supposed.

No doubt could be entertained as to the origin of the Venetian set comprising numerous pieces of which a settee and two chairs are illustrated in Figures 417 and 418. With a combined richness and crudeness, *naïveté* and sophistication, that is the supreme charm of Italian art of this period, they may without fear of exaggeration be called the climax of Italian colour, for they are painted a soft, brilliant tone of ultramarine and the decora-

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tions are emphasized with that pale yellow tone of gilding in which the Italians excelled. The settee varies slightly from the chairs in the treatment of the legs, which are outlined with gilded mouldings instead of being fluted. Otherwise the detail is identical; the framework of the back with the exception of the top, which supports the carved and gilded drapery swags, is moulded, the mouldings being brought out in gold. Decorating the top rail of the back and the rail of the seat are designs of baskets of flowers, bow-knots, and foliage etched in gold. Original blue taffeta cushions on seats of rush enhance the beauty of these rare and delightful pieces.

Of the numerous examples following, Figures 421 and 422 are notable for very charming splat

decorations in a sort of Piranesi-chinoiserie manner. In Italy the chinoiserie style persisted well into the century. Nor was it confined to Venice, for we know that in the year 1783 the Roman villa restored by Cardinal Colonna di Sciarra was completely furnished in Chinese taste.

Figures 419 and 420 are notable for their colour, which dispels much of the coldness of the design. They are of a light yellow-grey, the whole of the frame and the flutings of the legs being painted with lines of blue-green. In the painted floral decorations and the motifs of the interlacing



FIG. 424. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. NAPLES, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 425. WALNUT SETTEE. EMILIA, END OF THE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

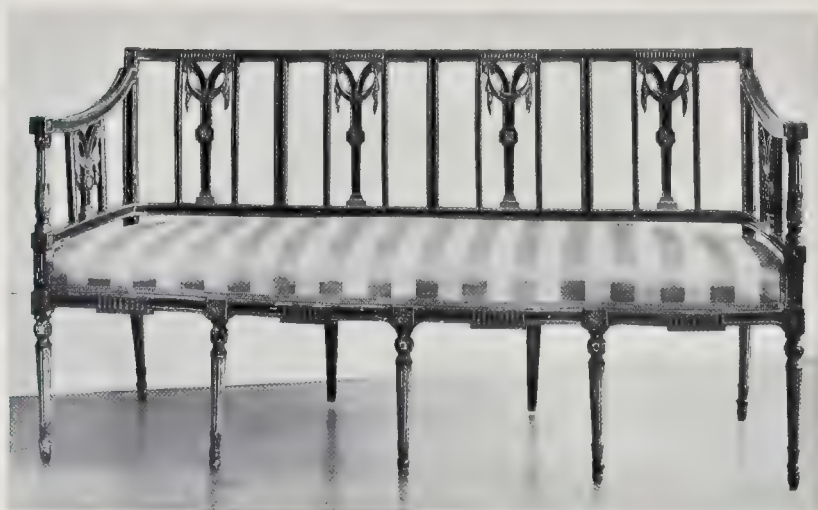


FIG. 426. BLACK AND GOLD SETTEE. LOMBARDY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. HOWARD CUSHING, NEW YORK CITY

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backs are introduced tones of soft red and yellow-green.

The furniture of Livorno, or Leghorn as it was called by the English, was prominent in the eighteenth century because of the great quantity and its striking resemblance to that of England. Through the extensive improvement to the town and harbour made by Ferdinand I. of Tuscany Leghorn became a rich and progressive seaport. Being strictly a commercial town no literary academies or Arcadian cults flourished here,



FIG. 427. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 428. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR ACCOMPANYING SETTEE ILLUSTRATED IN FIG. 426

instead there was a throng of merchants from many parts of the world who carried on a considerable trade with England and the Levant. The trade with England accounted for the host of English residents whose language was spoken as freely as Italian. Mrs. Piozzi, during her visit there in 1784, writes: "I should think myself in England almost, but for the difference of dresses that pass under my balcony."

In this town of merchants, traders, inn-keepers, and a fairly comfortable

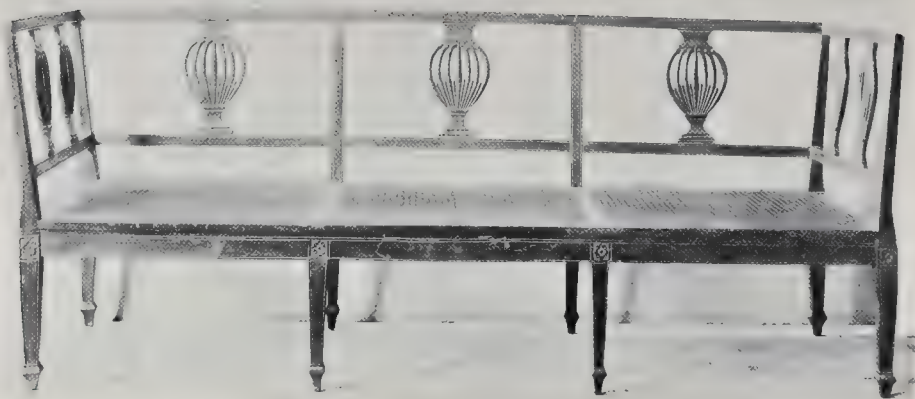


FIG. 429. WALNUT SETTEE. LIGURIA, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 430. WALNUT SETTEE. LOMBARDY, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF JOHN LAVEZZO & BROS., INC., NEW YORK CITY

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middle class there were to be found few great palaces and magnificent churches, yet De' Archenholtz writes, "It does not want for elegant dwellings, most sumptuously furnished. Sir Dykes, the English consul, has carried that luxury to a degree of extravagance even unknown to Italian princes. His house, of un-

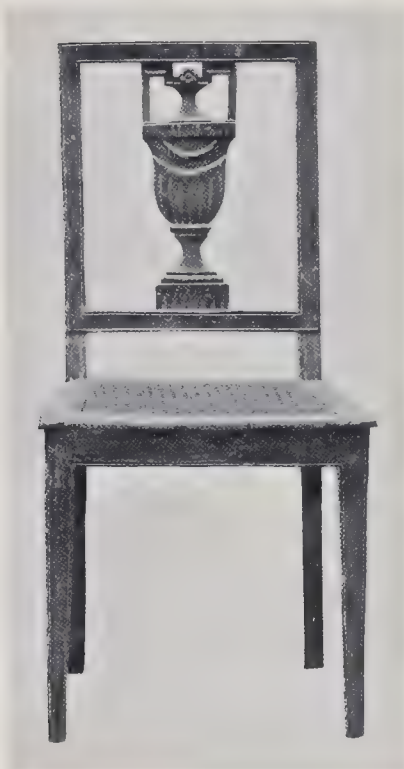


FIG. 432. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 431. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY, OR EMILIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF FRANK ALVAH PARSONS, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

common extent, was then divided into summer and winter apartments and each part, from the tapestry to the smallest utensil, was different and most capriciously selected for each season. This refinement has been invented by the French, though it has hitherto been little imitated in other countries."

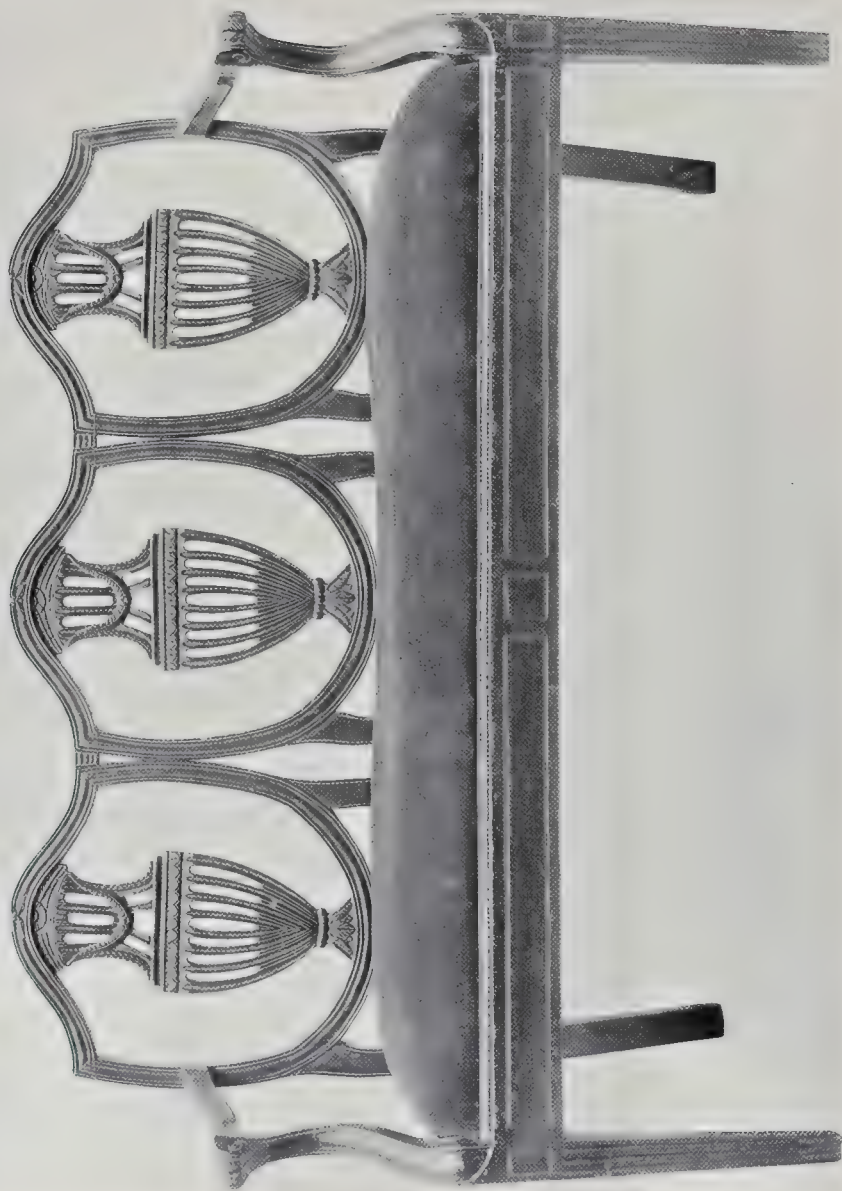


FIG. 433. WALNUT SETTEE. LIVORNO, ABOUT 1780-90
COURTESY OF P. W. FRINCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

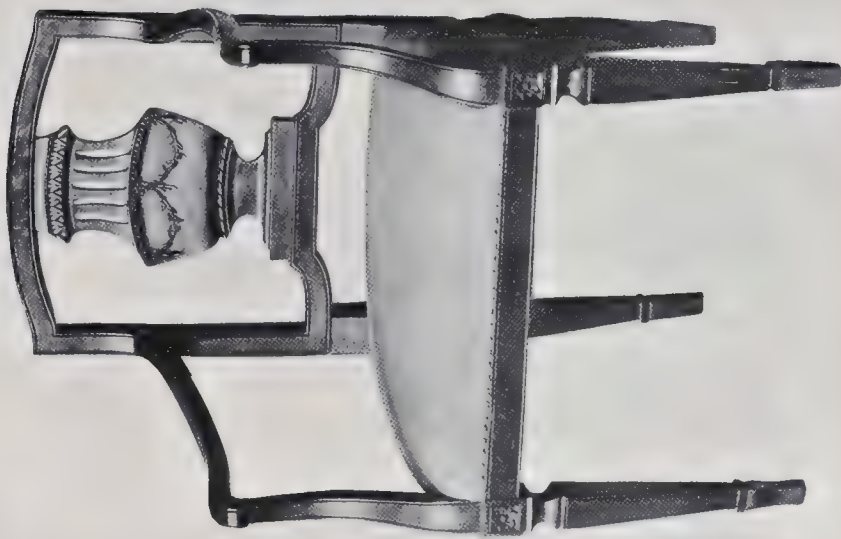


FIG. 434. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. VENICE. LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF ANTONIO SALVADORI, VENICE

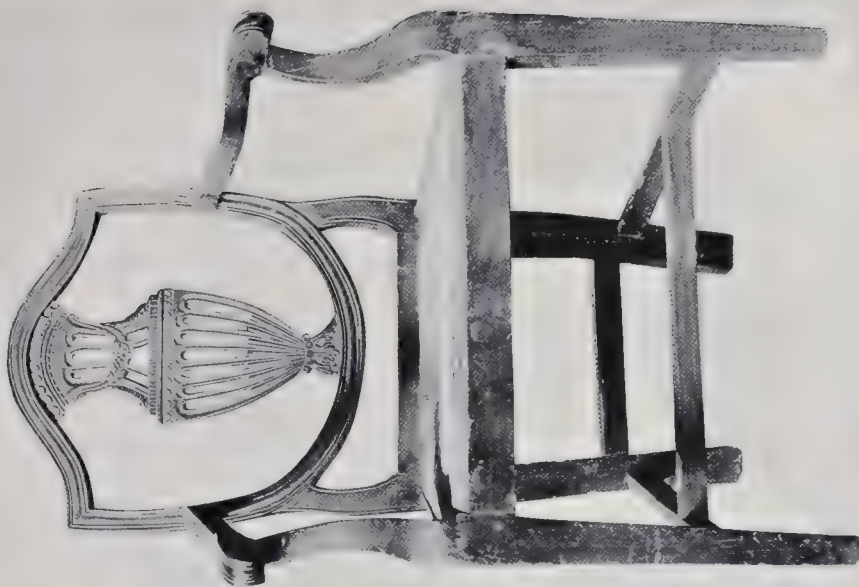


FIG. 435. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LIVORNO, ABOUT 1780-90
THE PROPERTY OF CHARLES A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

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FIG. 436. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1800
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

Before bringing to a close the study of the furniture of this period some mention should be made of the *canné* chairs and settees which prevailed quite generally throughout Italy. And no wonder, for their light, open, comfortable aspect seems quite appropriate to the Italian climate. Though, as has been said, the style was quite general, the greatest number of the finer examples come from the north central section, parts of Liguria and Lombardy. Figures 387 and 388 illustrate part of a large salon set painted green with decorations of yellow. These, like most of the fur-

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niture of this kind, belong to that period of Italian Louis Seize and date generally from the years 1770 to 1785, far fewer canné pieces being found in the later Italian classical style.

The chaise longue is less often found and the few Italian examples are generally from the northern half of the peninsula. As the one pictured in Figure 386 illustrates, these pieces follow very closely the French models from which they are derived. They are, however, Italianized by their decorative colour schemes, like the one



FIG. 438. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1780
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 437. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1780
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

illustrated, which is painted blue with moulds of yellow.

From the vicinity of Modena, Parma, and Brescia come numerous chairs, both side and arm, also settees, similar to those illustrated in Figures 392, 393, and 396. They are generally simple and finished in walnut, the colour more often being left light and natural. These crude quaint pieces are also found painted yellow, green, and occasionally blue.

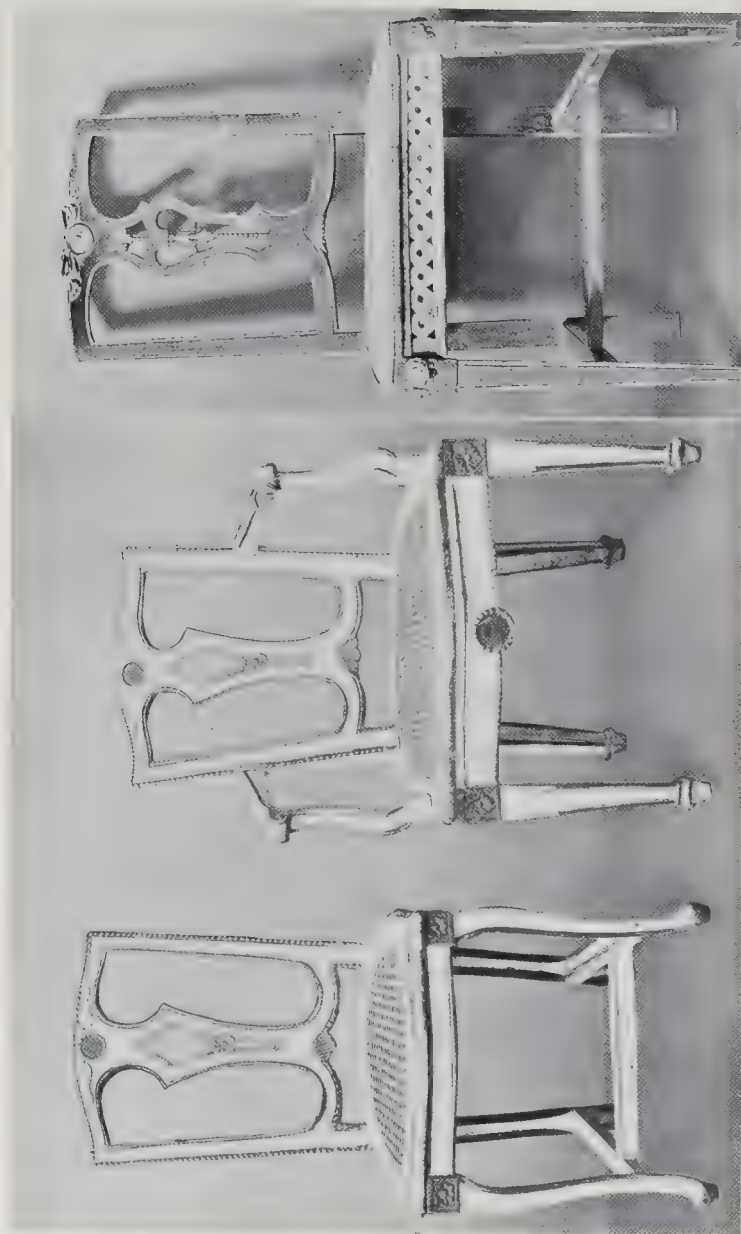


FIG. 439. WHITE AND GOLD CHAIRS. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1780-90
COURTESY OF LEONE RICCI, NEW YORK CITY

FIG. 440. WALNUT AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
EMILIA, ABOUT 1780-90
THE PROPERTY OF CHARLES A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 441. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. EMILIA, OR TUSCANY, ABOUT 1790
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 442. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY, LATE XVIII CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. MURRAY COBB, WASHINGTON, D. C.



FIG. 443. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. ROME, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

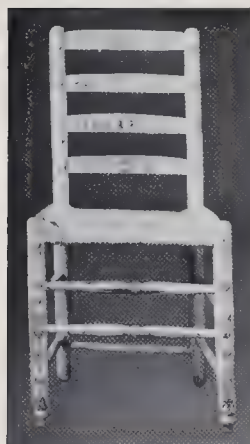


FIG. 444. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. VENETIA, LATE XVIII CENTURY
COURTESY OF LEONE RICCI, NEW YORK CITY




FIG. 445. PAINTED SIDE CHAIRS. ROME, OR TUSCANY, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 446. GREEN AND GOLD WALL TABLE. ROME, ABOUT 1800-5
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

CHAPTER IV
THE EMPIRE STYLE
THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

OWHERE outside of France was the style of the Empire more originally and successfully expressed than in Italy. Though resulting from logical causes, rarely associated with any acknowledged artistic movement of the Italians, it is not generally considered how closely associated Italy was with its development, how the style was largely based upon the work of Piranesi, and how its greatest patron, Napoleon, who was of Italian origin, made Italy to a large extent the theatre of his realized ambitions, both military and social.

The French army entered Italy in 1796; in ten months Napoleon was practically master of the peninsula, destroying old political structures and by his ineffaceable work of reconstruction evoking, doubtless, the first definite vision of the national unity of Italy. Since the invasion of Charles VIII. the suspicious and unfriendly little states of Italy had been more or less rearranged to suit the ambition of their conquerors, but never before had such a complete transformation taken place as ensued under Napoleon's rule. After being invested with the iron crown of Lombardy in 1804 the work began. Territorial changes followed with amazing rapidity. Savoy, Piedmont, Parma, Genoa, Tuscany, parts of the Papal States and the Dalmatian provinces of Venice were incorporated into France, while Milan, Modena, continental Venice, the remaining Papal States and Ancona were formed into the Kingdom of Italy, Napoleon assuming its crown. Principalities and duchies were lavishly bestowed upon members of the Bonaparte family. Three aspiring sisters had to be provided for. Élise, the eldest, became the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, governing with amazing skill,

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while Caroline, who married Murat, was made Queen of Naples and subsequently revolutionized Neapolitan styles. But it was the beautiful Pauline, wedded to a Borghese prince, who really made the Empire mode fashionable in Italy. Luxurious as she was charming, she inaugurated a



FIG. 447. PAINTED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

period of extravagance and exaggeration at Rome, where she assumed imperial airs, spending a fortune on dress and the decoration of villas and palaces.

Bewildering as were the territorial changes, they were accompanied by equally sweeping artistic and social upheavals, for the French Revolution had come down into a veritable Goldonian comedy with all its periwigs, masks, and laughter, as a storm dispersing a carnival. The old scene was a familiar one, "Dukes enjoying taxes and mistresses, priests accepting oblations and snuff, nobles sipping chocolate and pocketing rent, while

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the poor peasants kept behind the scenes, sweated and toiled for a bare subsistence." But as these lingering traces of feudalism were abolished by the institution of more uniform laws, modern science and efficiency began to affect backward Italian society, opening public life to the talented,



FIG. 448. PAINTED AND GILDED CONSOLE TABLE. ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

as it advanced industry and commerce. The middle classes began to assume somewhat their modern significance, for with the development of commerce the rich merchant and tradesman came into existence, living in comfortable houses and enjoying comparative luxury. Not only merchants, but lawyers and other professional men who were rising in power, steadily increased their ranks and adopting as they did, the manners of the aristocracy, eagerly accepted the new styles, thus encouraging the output of new modes in dress, furniture, and the decoration of houses.

At Rome the contrast with the old régime was, perhaps, the most

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striking. When the standard of the church was replaced on the Castello S. Angelo by the French tricolour the old form of government was abolished,



FIGS. 449 AND 450. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAMES. LOMBARDY, EARLY XIX CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

yet it was amazing how soon changes were wrought in the outward attitude of the church, nobles, and people toward the hated French régime. The Pope was not long in recognizing the French Republic and received

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its ambassador, Joseph Bonaparte, with much pomp and ceremony. This was followed by a series of extravagant entertainments at the Corsini palace, where the brother of Napoleon had been established, to which flocked the Roman nobility, ecclesiastical authorities, and papal ambassadors, to pay honour to the lately reviled and excommunicated.



FIG. 451. GILDED WALL TABLE. ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
COURTESY OF THE SANGIORGI GALLERIES, ROME

The French Revolution changed Rome as by enchantment. We learn from the illuminating diary of Abbé Benedetti that in one month after the tricolour was planted "People began to dress in the French fashion. The three-cornered hats were changed from two-cornered ones, and pig-

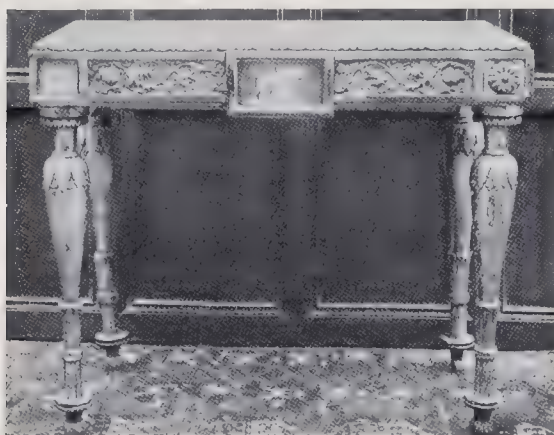


FIG. 452. PAINTED WALL TABLE. ROME, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF KARL FREUND, NEW YORK CITY

tails were cut off, and many are to be seen hanging against the walls of the city. Coats are red or sky blue; waistcoats, sky blue or red. The knee-breeches have been lengthened until they fall over the shoes, ladies have left off their high head-dresses, and replaced them by tur-

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 453. CARVED AND GILDED MIRROR FRAME.
ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
COURTESY OF F. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

bans, and they have also done away with hoops, and their skirts cling tightly around their legs." In a relatively short space of time palaces and houses were refurnished or decorated in the Empire style, which lent itself to more hasty construction than that of its predecessors.

Milan, however, inaugurated at a considerably earlier date a social and artistic régime that rivalled the order at Paris. In 1797 Napoleon had established a court at the Villa Montevello where he lived most pretentiously; it was not, however, until the early years of the nineteenth century, when, as viceroy, Eugène Beauharnais and his young wife occupied the splendid Castello Reale at Monza, that the graceful social era of the Italian Empire began. The old villa and gardens that had been designed in 1780 for the Arch-

duke Ferdinand and his duchess, Beatrice d'Este, were improved so extensively with new decorations and furnishings that they rivalled St. Cloud "for elegance and accommodation," and when the Austrians



FIG. 454. PAINTED AND GILDED WALL TABLE. LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1800



FIG. 455. BLUE AND GOLD WALL TABLE. ROME, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

returned after the fall of the French Republic "they found their dreary old villa no longer cognizable as the spot where Beatrice was wont to hold her imperial villeggiaturas." Here the court painter Appiani decorated, at Napoleon's order, the rotunda, the new theatre, and other apartments, as well as stately rooms in the viceroy's new town palace, with a series of frescoes that were considered the *chefs d'oeuvre* of that age.

For some time Milan had been one of the most prosperous and enlightened of the cities of Italy, and under each successive change all Lombardy continued to improve. Then, too, Milan became an object of special regard to Napoleon "as the seat of his second empire—his other Paris." Much of its modern aspect is due to his having streets improved, avenues opened, palaces erected, antiquities protected, and "cleanliness and general accommodation universally promoted; till it might also be said, in the metaphorical sense, that the city of brick was converted into one of marble."

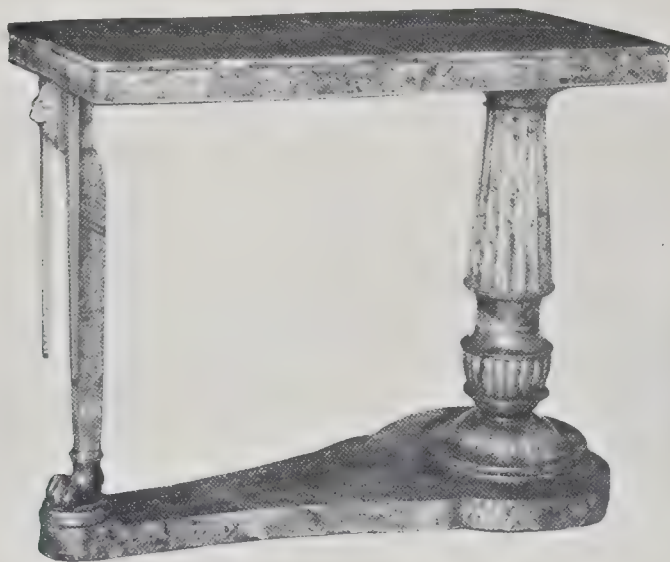


FIG. 456. ADJUSTABLE TABLE AND MUSIC STAND. LOMBARDY, EARLY XIX CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

With the rise of the middle classes, the increase of manufactures, and commercial wealth, Milanese social life was no longer confined to the aristocracy.

For some time the condition of the gentry had been steadily improving until by now a class of small landed proprietors, springing out of the new order, effected a modification of Milanese society.

Among the many beautiful villas in the neighbourhood, a number were in the possession of the *bourgeoisie*; not a few shopkeepers had their casinos; and the gardens of the fashionable *modesta* are said to have been as much admired as her caps and bonnets.

Rank being no longer the only passport to a

drawing-room or even to a royal ball, many a beautiful and accomplished *cittadina* obtained a vogue in court circles, while a number of private



FIG. 457. MIRROR FRAME. ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 458. MAHOGANY WALL TABLE. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1815
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

citizens accumulated fortunes enabling them to live in such a fashion that Lady Morgan declares their equipages, which appeared in the Corso, "though destitute of supporters, and undorned by coronets, eclipsed by their richness and elegance, those of the high and unchanged aristoc-

racy; who, unable to compete with their new rivals, withdrew almost entirely from the contest."

Meanwhile the republic of Venice, too moribund and inert for resistance, was passing out like a waning sunset in a moment of exquisite grace. Picturesque as was her decline and magnificent as were her ruins, for some time she had been unable to conceal her poverty and decay, for threadbare cloaks of gold-flowered brocade, cracking façades of palaces, and no end of "glories peeling and scaling off" foretold the deplorable



FIG. 459. PAINTED WALL TABLE. NAPLES, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

end. Palaces were emptied of their treasures. "Open the contemporary news-sheets," writes Monnier, "and you find them as full of things for sale as a second-hand dealer's,"—while Gorgi compared the Republic to "an old woman selling off her furniture."

Napoleon accomplished the rest. On May 12, 1797, when the Great



FIG. 460. PAINTED AND GILDED WALL TABLE. ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

Council of the Republic met for the last time, it resolved to accept the provisional government of Bonaparte and a few days later the French took possession of the city. An unscrupulous plundering and transportation of Venetian masterpieces of art to Paris was begun; the "Golden Book" was burned at the foot of the "Tree of Liberty," nobles were impoverished to a state of beggary by confiscations, and the unparalleled social structure reared during eleven centuries of brilliant Venetian life collapsed like a house built of exquisitely coloured cards.

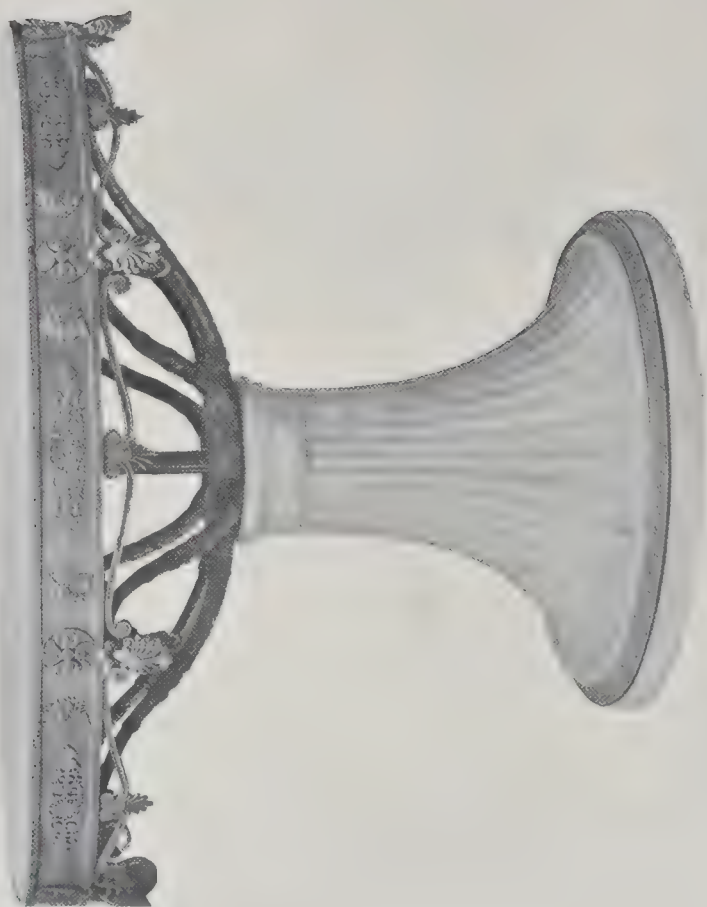


FIG. 461. CENTRE TABLE OF MARBLE AND GILDED BRONZE. ROME, ABOUT 1815
FROM THE BARBINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

It is vain to look to Venice for any manifestation of the Empire mode worthy of her glorious past. Forsythe, who was there in 1802, describes the palaces as deserted, their masters "retired from a city they could no longer govern, to their estates on the continent; and there reducing their establishments, left the tradesmen in town to deplore the void." Perhaps under the despotism of France Venice would have had some chance of maintaining her social traditions, but after the city and

its dependencies were bartered to Austria "like a bale of goods; thrown in as a make-weight in a bargain and ruled with a policy that would disgrace the brute ignorance of invading Huns," desolation and depression damped all industry and quenched all hope. Not a single Venetian was at the head of any branch of government, except the President of the Academy of Arts, "who, exclusive of his high reputation and undeniable fitness to continue in office, had the additional merit of doing his duties gratis." Throughout every other department of the State, Germans alone presided, maintaining a policy studied and designed to break the spirit of the Venetians.

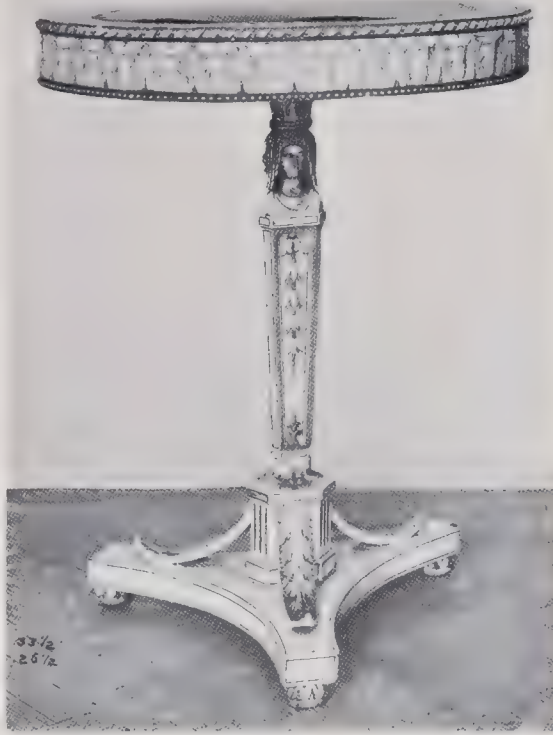


FIG. 462. PAINTED CENTRE TABLE. ROME, OR NAPLES, ABOUT 1800

THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 463. PAINTED AND GILDED PEDESTALS. LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1810
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

But at Naples things were different. Here the style was profusely and beautifully developed under more favourable conditions. Though the new régime was of short duration, Murat, who came to the throne in 1808, succeeded in winning popularity by introducing new principles of reform. Notwithstanding its participation in the Napoleonic wars, being an age of prosperity and general improvement, every branch of government was developed; roads were made and schools established, extending civilization and the arts throughout the province; extensive excavations were carried on at Pompeii; the porcelain and silk manufac-

tories were encouraged; new furniture was made for palaces and as a whole "society was mounted upon the Parisian scale."

During the short space of Murat's reign, Caroline, his queen, encour-

ITALIAN FURNITURE

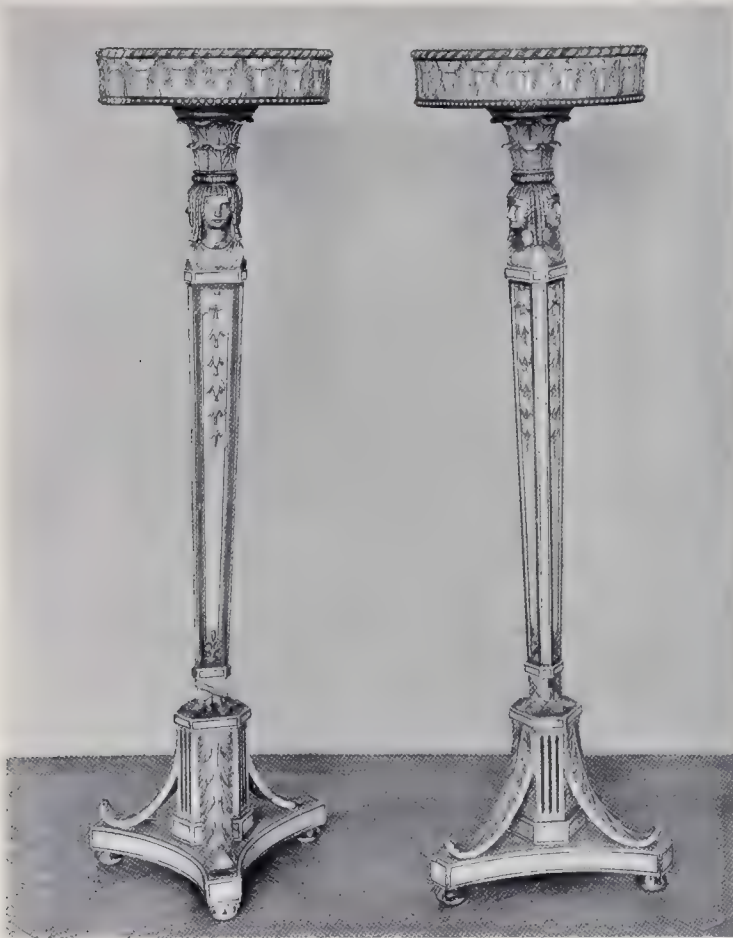


FIG. 464. PAINTED PEDESTALS. ROME, OR NAPLES, ABOUT 1800
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.

aged and successfully established the Empire fashion in furniture and decoration as well as in dress. The old Royal Villa at Portici was completely renovated and becoming as it did the criterion of taste, it is well to give Lady Morgan's description of it just after it had been left by Caroline. "The old custode, who showed us the apartments, had some

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 465. PAINTED AND GILDED CENTRE TABLE. MILAN,
EARLY XIX CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

difficulty in naming his late mistress by the title of Madame Murat, instead of 'her majesty' and had evidently got up a new vocabulary for the new (or old) régime. On entering, he observed to us that the whole of the very elegant vestibule, in which we stood, the broad and double staircase, the spacious corridor, and the beautiful little theatre into which it opens were all '*fatti da Madame Murat.*' Again, a long gallery ornamented with superb candelabras and

accommodated with elegant ottomans, extorted the laconic '*fatto da Madame Murat.*' In a word, we found that endless suites of apartments, baths, cabinets, book-rooms, greenhouses, orangeries, etc., etc., were all either painted, decorated, and furnished, or planned and erected 'da Madame Murat.' Some of the rooms exhibited a very extraordinary degree of taste in 'consulting the genius of the place.' The walls were covered with paintings, copied from Pompeii, and the furniture was imitated from objects discovered there and still preserved in the Museo at Naples. The draperies were all of the Neapolitan loom; for 'Madame Murat' made a complete clearing out of all the old and tawdry furniture of this palace

ITALIAN FURNITURE

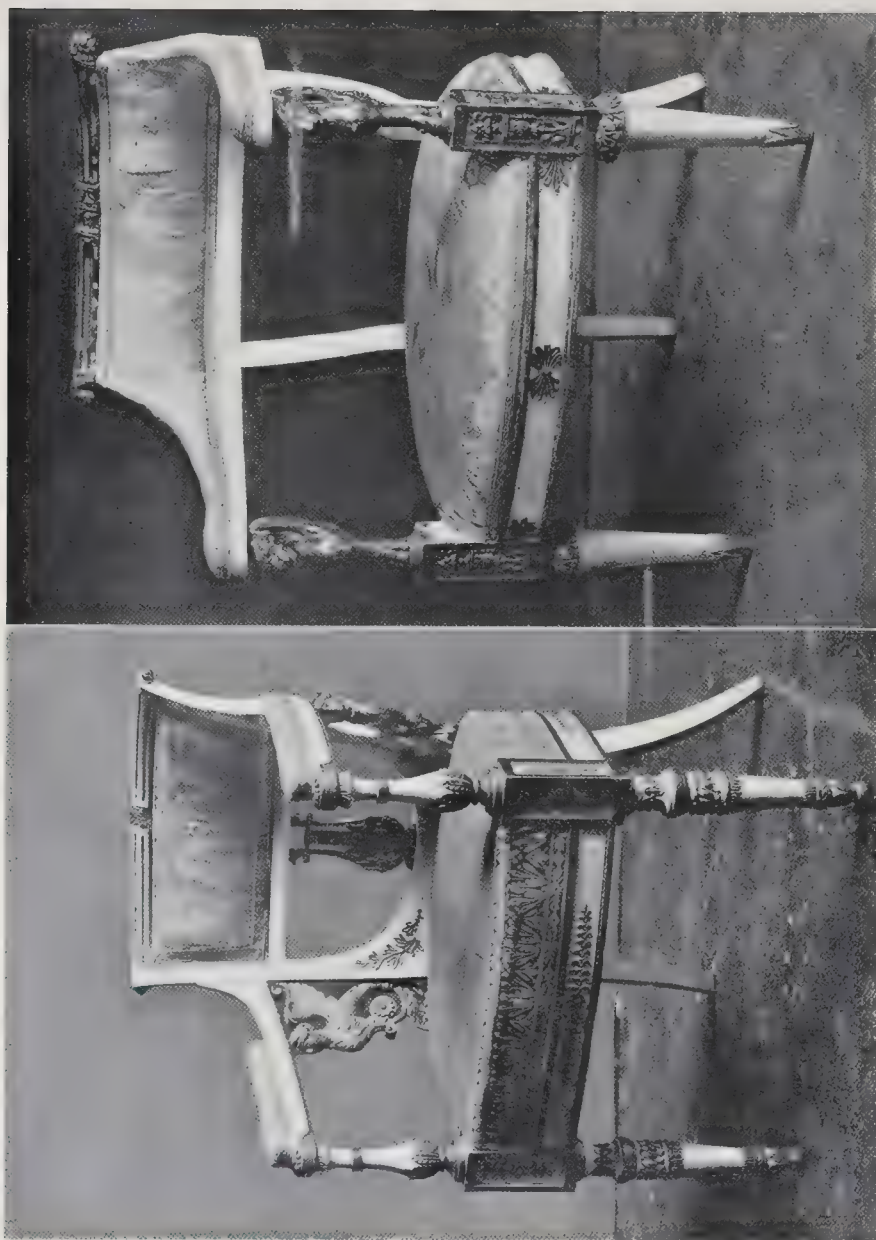
so that, on the return of the royal family, they knew it as little as many other objects of reformation and improvement.

"The apartments of the Ex-Queen are models of elegance and feminine



FIG. 466. CENTRE TABLE WITH PAINTED TOP. ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

taste. The bed-room, dressing-room, boudoir, and library, are eminently so; and have been left precisely as she last occupied them. Her dressing-boxes are on the toilette; a miniature of her nephew, the little Napoleon,



FIGS. 467 AND 468. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIRS. ROME, ABOUT 1815
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

(hung by a ribbon) decorates the chimney-piece; her *dejeune*, on an English tray, stands in the centre of the room; and some pretty *estrennes* (worked and embroidered for her by her ladies a few days before her reverses) are scattered on a sofa.

"Murat's apartments join his wife's: they are equally luxurious, splendid, and commodious; the hangings all silk and satin; the carpets all English and Turkey. The toilette splendid and elegant, as that of the vainest *petite maitresse*, or royal beauty. Close to his superb sleeping room is a simple little



FIG. 469. WALNUT ARM CHAIR.
LIGURIA, EARLY XIX CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF JAMES DEERING, ESQ.



FIG. 470. WHITE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
MILAN, ABOUT 1812
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

cabinet, with a small white dimity camp bed, where his secretary slept. Here, in this little bed of the ex-secretary, sleeps the Royal Bourbon—the legitimate King of Naples, when he makes his visit to Portici. It is said that he walks about the palace in endless amusement, admiring all the elegant finery of which he has become the master; but still adhering to the little dimity bed, and the secretary's closet, which resembles his own homely bed-room in the palace at Naples."

And Lucca had its "Empire Court." After Élise was established as Grand Duchess of Tuscany she set about, with the energy

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 471. GILDED ARM CHAIR. FLORENCE, EARLY XIX CENTURY
FROM THE PITTI PALACE, FLORENCE

Palace and the Villa Marlia, which a critic of that day declares "even in Paris would be called superb."

The rich hills that surround the city abounded in villas, that of Marlia belonging to the Bonaparte duchess, on the way to the Baths of Lucca, being the most beautifully furnished. Just after it was taken by Élise in

of her imperial brother, to transform Lucca into a little Paris. Churches and houses were torn down to make room for the Piazza Napoleone and the old Royal Palace was renovated into an environment befitting "the great court she gathered about her." She also took a lively interest in the promotion of art and industry, notably in a well-known school of craftsmen and cabinet makers which under her instruction produced a considerable quantity of furniture, including that for the Royal

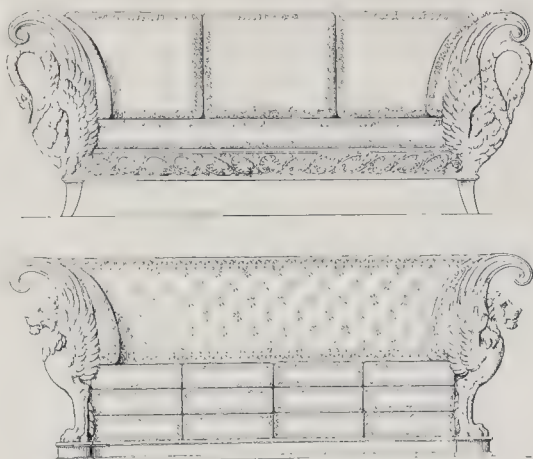


FIG. 472. DESIGNS FOR SOFAS BY MOGLIA, OR VACCANI, ABOUT 1820



FIGS. 473 AND 474. WHITE AND GOLD ARM CHAIRS. NAPLES, ABOUT 1812
THE PROPERTY OF THE MUSEE SARAH AND ELEANOR HEWITT, NEW YORK CITY

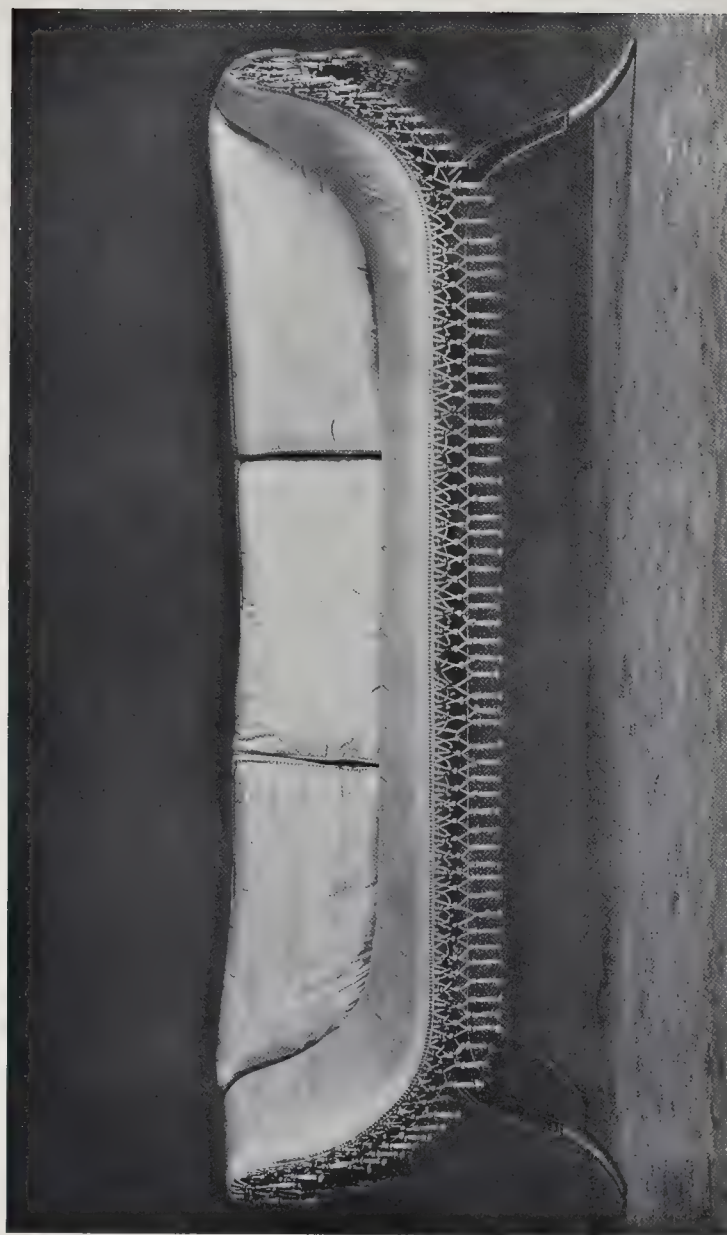


FIG. 475. MAHOGANY SETTEE. ROME, ABOUT 1815
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

1806, Bienaimé and Lazzarini began their extensive alterations and decorations, costing over half a million francs. Other villas as well as town palaces displayed in their furnishings and decorations the new mode of Paris, for the upper ranks of the people were in general almost opulent and exceptionally well informed. In

fact, the entire population had always given evidence of thrift, order, and intelligence, living in comparative domestic comfort, which accounts for the

production of much simply designed and well-made furniture.

Though the Empire style may be said to have been anticipated in Italy long before it was established in France, it was left to the French to organize and, generally speaking, to the Italians, to render their interpretation of it as in former periods of the eighteenth century. The "Italian Empire Style," like the



FIG. 476. GILDED STOOL. EMILIA OR LOMBARDY, EARLY XIX CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF MRS. STANFORD WHITE, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 477. WALNUT STOOL. ROME, ABOUT 1812
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

epoch of Neo-classicism, may be divided into two phases. The first period, dating from 1800 to 1808, was little more than a continuation of late



FIG. 478. PAINTED CHAIR. EMILIA, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1815
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK CITY

eighteenth century classicism treated with greater severity, the materials, structure, and basic forms being but little altered. This is accounted for, to a great extent, by the influence Albertolli continued to exert over the Italian decorative arts during the greater part of the Napoleonic era.

ITALIAN FURNITURE

Not only did this great organizer of eighteenth century neo-classicism in Italy maintain his popularity at the Academy of Milan, but one of the



FIG. 479. PAINTED AND GILDED CHAIR. VENETIA, OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1800
COURTESY OF KELLER & CO., NEW YORK CITY

finest examples of his style, the villa at Bellaggio, built for the vice-president of the Italian Republic, was not begun until 1810. Bridging the span between imitations of the Louis Seize style and the Empire mode, much of his work of the early nineteenth century may be called transitional, par-

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 480. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. LOMBARDY,
EARLY XIX CENTURY
FROM THE MUSEO CIVICO, MILAN

products, which give its character to the Italian expression. Percier and Fontaine, who established the Empire style in France, published their first work in 1802 after considerable study in Italy. It was not, however, until Fontaine was appointed first architect to the Emperor (1813) that the mode had universal sway over French expression. At about the same time, several of the countries contiguous to France began their imitation or interpreta-

ticularly in his furniture design, which shows a decided feeling of the Empire in its principal lines, as seen in the bishop's chair in the Cathedral of Milan.

The second phase was to a great extent frankly an interpretation of the designs of Percier and Fontaine, sometimes in materials common to the work of French craftsmen, but more often in the native Italian



FIG. 481. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. LIGURIA,
OR EMILIA, ABOUT 1800
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

ITALIAN FURNITURE

tion of the style; especially was this true in Italy, where Piranesi in his "Diverse Maniere," with its countless engravings of furniture, chimney-pieces, and other decorative objects bearing a resemblance to the new manner, had not only furnished Percier and Fontaine with inexhaustible material but had, some years earlier, interested the Italian designer in the adaptation of antique models. From these successive contributing influences—Piranesi, Albertolli,

Percier, and Fontaine—emerged Vaccani and Moglia, both pupils of Albertolli and the two most renowned designers of the "Italian Empire Style." Vaccani maintained in his work the traditions of his master's school, and though it was pervaded by an even colder classicism of his own, it displays considerable originality and much freedom of composition. In the modelling of his figures, however, he lacks the grace and delicacy of Albertolli. He achieved marked success in the decoration of large rooms of stately character, also in designs for the decorations of theatres and public edifices. It is, however, in his beautiful chiaroscuro painting that he excelled, as may be seen in the Palazzo Brera and the villa at Monza.



FIG. 482. PAINTED CHAIR. NAPLES, ABOUT 1812
COURTESY OF P. W. FRENCH & CO., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 483. WALNUT SIDE CHAIRS, 1800-20

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 484. GREEN AND GOLD CHAIRS. TUSCANY, EARLY XIX CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

Moglia, like Vaccani, was an ardent disciple of antiquity, but more eclectic in taste. Though his devotion to Greek and Roman ideals dominates his work, as an instructor he advises his pupils to draw from more diversified sources, including Egyptian and Mexican art. Milan being the centre of progress and learning, his position of instructor at the Milan Academy (1845-52) enabled him to exert a wide influence in the maintenance of a high standard for Italian industrial arts, no doubt suppressing to a great extent the romantic movement that was prevailing in the more northern countries of Europe.

Decoration in the style of these masters and of Percier and Fontaine seemed admirably suited to the large, bare Italian rooms, lending itself to the work of many excellent chiaroscuro painters who, in rooms devoid of cornices and architraves, imitated through this medium. Panels representing bas-reliefs, mouldings, niches, vases, and statuary were also skil-

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 485. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY,
ABOUT 1800
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

hogany was universally used for the furniture of France. To this was applied elaborately chiselled mounts, often producing an undeniably stiff and cold effect. It is true some of the richer Empire furniture of Italy is constructed of mahogany, but the greater part is of walnut, when not painted. Ormolu mounts, as in former periods, were rarely used by Italian craftsmen except in a few sumptuous examples. With the absence of metal mounts and with the

fully imitated by their brushes. The style was equally well adapted to magnificent interiors with marble pilasters, fine cornices, mosaic floors, and collections of sculpture.

In spite of the fact that Italian furniture in the Empire style is inferior to that of France in quality of craftsmanship, in other ways it often achieves a more agreeable aesthetic effect. As is generally known ma-



FIG. 486. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY,
OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1800
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

ITALIAN FURNITURE

use of walnut, a softer wood with more warmth of texture, or else with surfaces painted in the more velvety Italian technique, a certain amount of harshness and coldness is dispelled in the stiffest Empire forms. The less perfect craftsmanship was, in a way advantageous, to the extent of giving a certain irregularity and freedom to the formal designs that in France were executed with much precision. Except in cases where



FIG. 487. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. LIGURIA,
EARLY XIX CENTURY

THE PROPERTY OF HOWARD MAJOR, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 488. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1810

COURTESY OF MRS. ALEXANDER VAN RENSSELAER
BARNWALL, NEW YORK CITY

the French styles were literally copied the Italian Empire is less limited and decidedly more eclectic, for as previously stated the true Italian expression retains more of the Piranesi manner and much of the neo-classic tradition, while at times even traces of Renaissance antiquity can be detected, all of which contributes to variety and beauty in combination.

The most pleasing examples are those that are painted, among which are many console tables of excellent design. One of unusually large proportions, painted green, with carved and gilded

ITALIAN FURNITURE

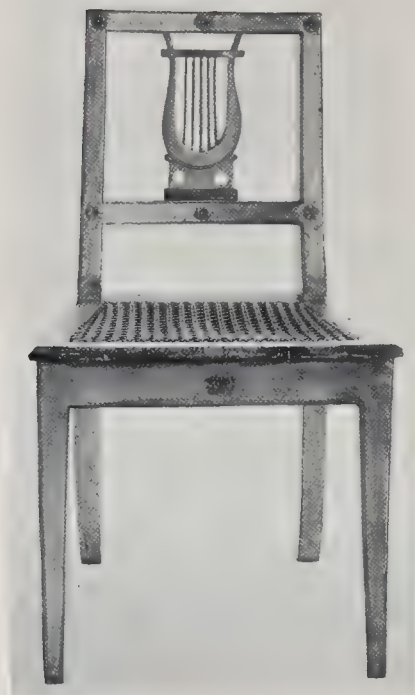


FIG. 489. BLUE AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
ROME, EARLY XIX CENTURY
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ, NEW YORK CITY

appearance. The frieze is also arranged in the eighteenth century manner—a centre tablet with an urn and swags with other tablets placed directly over the legs with stiff Empire rosettes. The ornament filling the remaining part of the frieze, composed of interlacing circles, was much used during this period. Another noticeable feature of these

decorations, is illustrated in Figure 446. Being one of the earlier ones, dating about 1800-05, it is based on the same general plan as many tables of the late eighteenth century. The new model is, however, anticipated in parts of the ornament. Though the round fluted legs are retained from the preceding style, the stiff lotus leaves extending from the bands at the top give it a decided Empire



FIG. 490. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. EMILIA,
OR TUSCANY, ABOUT 1815
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON, NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE

tables is marble tops of uncommon thickness, this being often obtained, as in this case, by the application of veneer to a concrete body.

Tops were also of scagliola, a substance composed of fragments of antique marbles, an instance of which is given in Figures 447 and 448. Both are Roman tables, Figure 447 being one of a pair painted light green with gilded decorations.



FIG. 492. WALNUT AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
TUSCANY, EARLY XIX CENTURY
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 491. RED AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1815
THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR

The legs are a variation of those seen in Figure 446, with leaves omitted at the top. The centre tablet of the frieze, illustrating a fable, is flanked by urns with swags of flowers. Figure 448, painted cream and gold, also one of a pair, shows a variety of leg often used in the construction of console tables during the first decade of the nineteenth century. In many cases the turning at the top was given a more exaggerated treatment producing a gro-

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FIG. 493. WALNUT ARM CHAIR. ROME, OR NAPLES,
ABOUT 1815

THE PROPERTY OF CHARLES A. PLATT, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

tesque effect. In Figure 451 the turning at the top has been enriched with acanthus leaves somewhat in the form of Corinthian capitals, below which the legs are shaped and carved in a debased manner, with inverted leaves, the decoration extending about halfway down the legs while the remaining part is fluted. All of the motifs embellishing the frieze are typical of the fully developed Empire, in fact this

example may be dated about 1810-14, when the style was at its height. The top is of marble and the rest of the table is gilded.

Another notable point in Italian work is the use of carved and gilded wood ornaments applied in the manner of ormolu mounts, as illustrated in the frieze of the table shown in Figure 455. As a rule these ornaments followed the designs of the French *ciseleur*, though at times more originality is displayed. Being executed in wood they are naturally of enlarged scale and coarser execution. Because of the brittleness of the wood and the cutting, in places, they have suffered much through shipping, for they are easily detached, being applied only with glue. In the case of Figure 455 these resemble a Louis Seize design, considerably enlarged. Again the legs are a variation of the most popular eighteenth century type, fluted,

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partly astragalled and combined with upper and lower sections carved in stiff patterns of Empire foliage. The colour scheme, which is green-blue and gold, emphasizes its Italian character.

Figure 454 is a white and gold table with marble top in the style of Albertolli; the square tapering legs are embellished with a grape and vine motif which appears often in drawings of Albertolli, while the treat-



FIG. 495. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1820
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 494. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1820
COURTESY OF JOHN WANAMAKER, NEW YORK CITY

ment of the frieze, the drawing of the scrolls and the eagle are equally characteristic. The whole is, however, pervaded by much dryness and coolness that mark the later work of this school dating between the years 1800 and 1805.

Console tables finished in natural wood were not generally found until the close of the second decade of the century. An early example shown in Figure 458, one of a pair of smaller

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 496. PAINTED CHAIR. FLORENCE,
EARLY XIX CENTURY

were to be found of independent design similar to those seen in Figures 449 and 450, resting on legs and crowned at the top with an elaborate mass of open and rather fragile ornament. The moulds as a rule were narrow and delicately carved with the husk, guilloche, and other classic motifs. Of the two illustrated, Figure 449 appears to be of the earlier date. The mass of carving that

tables dating about 1810-15, is finished in mahogany. The legs are fluted and terminate in an eagle's claw and ball, showing rather fine detail. This detail together with the flutes of the leg and moulds that frame the panels of the frieze are gilded.

As in the preceding period console tables were generally accompanied by mirrors, designed in the same style, for in general there was little change in the arrangement of the salon, except in decorative detail. As the style advanced, however, many



FIG. 497. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1800
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

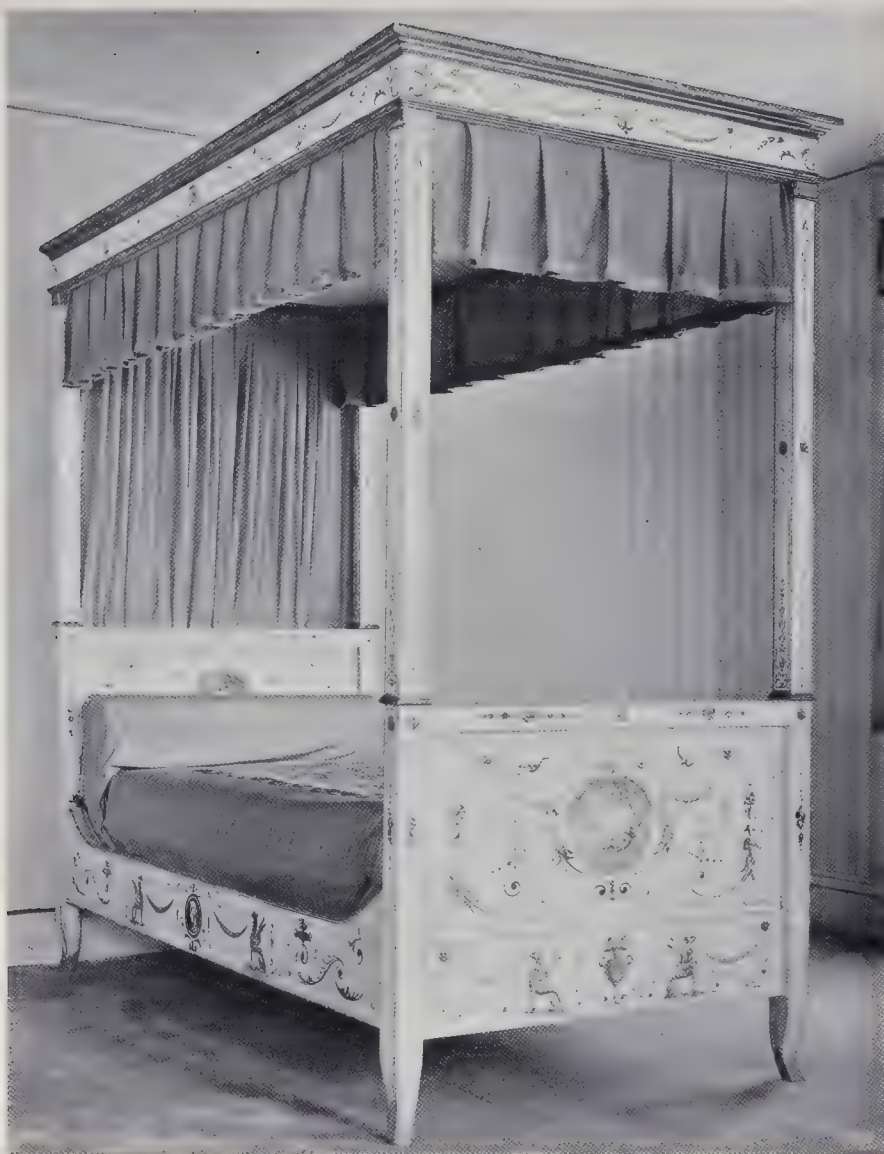


FIG. 498. PAINTED BED. FLORENCE, ABOUT 1810
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. EGERTON WINTHROP, NEW YORK CITY

ITALIAN FURNITURE



FIG. 499. PAINTED SIDE CHAIR. EMILIA,
ABOUT 1810

COURTESY OF CHAMBERLIN DODDS, ESQ., NEW YORK CITY

crowns the top, composed of an urn surrounded by foliated motifs, recalls many eighteenth century mirrors by the neo-classic workmen, yet the individual motifs have been treated in the stiffer manner affected by most of the designers of this period.

Figure 450 is highly representative of the early nineteenth century and expresses the style at its best. Though the arrangement is hardly varied, a certain stiffness is more apparent in the delicate detail that in this case produces a sense of decorative conventionalization. Like the accompanying example practically all in this style are entirely gilded.

Another mirror retaining characteristics of the former style is illustrated in Figure 453. Here, it is more in the drawing than in the selection or ornament that the influence of the Empire is apparent. The guilloche and bead with which the frame is carved again illustrates the tendency of the Italians to the retention of tradition, but motifs such as husk swags, foliated scrolls, and other details have in their transformation come thoroughly under the influence of early nineteenth century masters.

It is in the heavier and more architectural type of frame, still much in evidence, that the style is most adequately expressed, as seen in Figure 457. These, always accompanying tables as an integral part or else placed over chimney-pieces, were generally incorporated into the architectural scheme of the salon, the example illustrated being, probably, one of a series, for every large apartment had two or more. Of typical Empire



FIG. 500. PAINTED BED. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1815
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ITALIAN FURNITURE

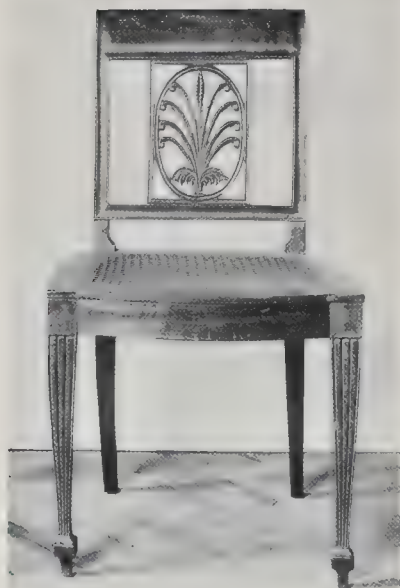


FIG. 501. WALNUT SIDE CHAIR. TUSCANY,
ABOUT 1815
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON,
NEW YORK CITY

design, displaying many of the popular motifs, it is painted green and cream, with parts of its ornament gilded. Many mirrors in this style were also finished in walnut, mahogany, or a mahoganized wood with carved and gilded decorations, while some had further additions of colour, a yellow-red and green tone being the usual choice.

The most popular centre tables were undoubtedly of round form, varying considerably in size. Some were copied directly from the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum, while many more were inspired by Percier and Fontaine's engravings. Particularly at Naples, where the designers had recourse to a

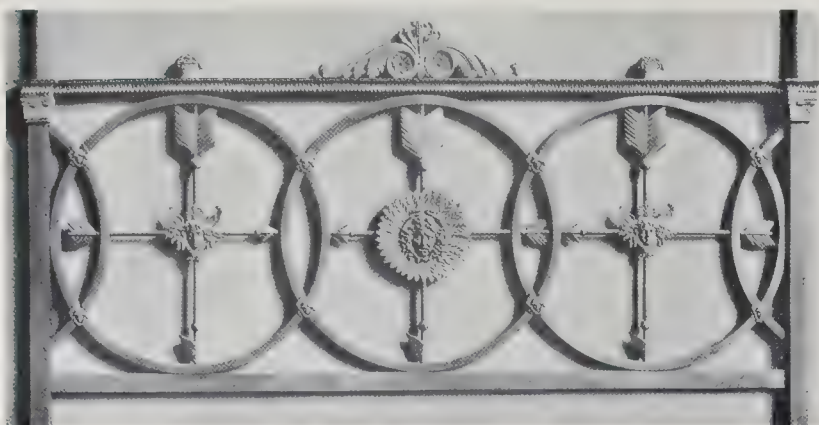


FIG. 502. DETAIL OF FIG. 503



FIG. 503. IRON BED. TUSCANY, OR LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1815
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

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large collection of Pompeiian objects, were the antique forms frequently copied. This fact was noted as early as 1802 by Forsythe, who in Naples at that time, writes, "All the finest tables, tripods, candlesticks, lamps,



FIG. 504. WALNUT CHEST OF DRAWERS. TUSCANY, ABOUT 1820
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. PHILIPS BROOKS ROBINSON, NEW YORK CITY

vases, patere, etc., were then absent (in the Museum at Herculaneum) but their forms are so convenient for modern life that you see them everywhere reproduced and multiplied in fashionable furniture. The silversmiths use the motifs as well." This tendency to copy or adapt was noticed, however, by an earlier visitor than Forsythe. Goethe was lodged in an apartment at Naples in 1787 which he says was "cheerfully decorated, es-

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pecially the ceiling, whose arabesques of a hundred compartments bear witness to the proximity of Pompeii and Herculaneum."

Though the round centre table in Figure 461 appears to be an original design its creation was nevertheless inspired by the antique. Made for an apartment in the Borghese palace, it is, like much of the Empire furniture from that palace, of the highest quality. The supporting member is of white marble, fluted and



FIG. 506. MAHOGANY COMMODOE INLAID
WITH GILDED BRONZE. LOMBARDY,
ABOUT 1800
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. ELSIE COBB WILSON,
NEW YORK CITY



FIG. 505. CHEST OF DRAWERS. TUSCANY,
ABOUT 1810
THE PROPERTY OF FRANK ALVAH PARSONS, ESQ.,
NEW YORK CITY

banded at the base with an ormolu band ornamented with a leaf motif. This holds the revolving marble top which is banded with an apron of gilded metal with beautifully chiselled motifs. The radiating structure supporting the top is also of metal and is less prominent in reality than it appears in the perspective of the reproduction.

Much of the elaborate Italian furniture of the early nineteenth century had its origin in Rome where a period of extravagance and pretentious display had been inaugurated. In addition to that



FIG. 507. FIG. 508 WHEN CLOSED



FIG. 508. WALNUT COMMUNE WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS. LOMBARDY, ABOUT 1815
THE PROPERTY OF MRS. JAMES A. BURDEN, NEW YORK CITY

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executed for the palace and villas of Pauline Borghese and a few of the older and more fortunate families of the aristocracy, a considerable quantity conspicuous for its aggressive taste was supplied for the newly enriched. During the second decade of the century when the style had reached an advanced state of development, practically a new Roman aristocracy had been formed of the wealthy families of the *mercanti di campagna*. There were cases, such as that of the rich tradesman Marconi, who married a Guistiniani, resided in the Palazzo Costa at San Marcello and built



FIG. 509. STAND ACCOMPANYING THE COMMUNE IN FIG. 508



FIG. 510. DRESSING TABLE ACCOMPANYING THE COMMUNE IN FIG. 508

a villa at Frascati near that of the Torlonia, living and entertaining like a veritable Croesus.

The great Torlonia family rose with the Revolution. Giovanni, the founder of the famous banking house, by gaining the confidence of Pius VII. was made a prince after accumulating one of the greatest fortunes of his day. For ten years he awaited the completion of the elaborate

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FIG. 511. WALNUT AND GOLD SIDE CHAIR.
ROME, ABOUT 1815
FROM THE BARDINI COLLECTION, FLORENCE

tures and gorgeous furniture, all in the worst taste which fill the corridors and salons, as they are not able to make beautiful apartments, they content themselves with making them gaudy." While there is still much evidence of this taste in surviving work, there are also examples of Roman furniture of the highest quality and splendid design, as the table just referred to attests.

decoration of the Palazzo Bolognetti in the Piazza Venezia, where he finally installed himself in magnificent state. His son acquired the old Palazzo Giraud. This was also refurnished in the Empire style to be used solely for entertaining. Henry Beyle, who was frequently in Rome between the years 1810 and 1828, refers to the festivities at the Torlonia Palaces and claims that the balls were more magnificent than those given by Napoleon in the Tuilleries, and Paul Desmair writes that "It would be impossible to describe the marble, pic-

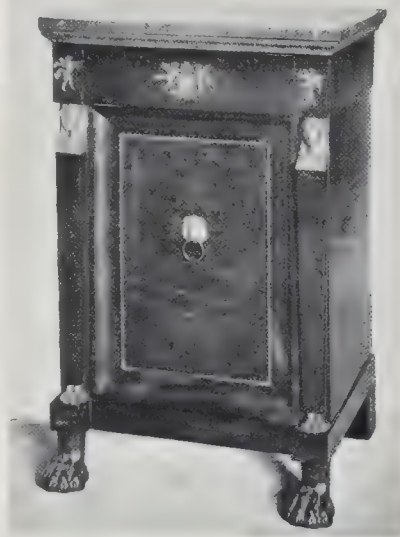


FIG. 512. SMALL COMMUNE ACCOMPANYING
FIG. 508

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Two round tables of smaller proportions are shown in Figures 465 and 466. The former, a representative Italian handling of the usual eighteenth century structure, is treated ornamentally with much Empire character. A noticeable feature is found in the decoration of the legs, where the lotus leaf is dropped quite low, producing unusual proportions. Again carved motifs in the style of ormolu mounts, but of enlarged scale, ornament the frieze. These are gilded and applied to a background of brownish-black paint. The top, of black slate painted in natural colours with a landscape showing the waterfalls at Tivoli, is banded by a floral border.

Figure 465, from Lombardy, is painted black and the carved decoration, emphasized in gold, is in the lighter style of that section where the influence of Albertolli was strongest. Furniture at times was painted black, yet it is doubtful if this formed the original scheme of the piece, as white and gold was the prevailing colour scheme in this province as well as at Rome and Naples. It must be recalled that in Lombardy the mode prevailed universally, not only in Milan but in the smaller towns and villas throughout the country. Lady Morgan often refers to the French aspect of the fashionable villas. "At a very pretty casino of the Marchese Trivulzio we enjoyed," she records, "a truly English country house day, in a French *maison de plaisance*. The arrangement and furniture of this villa were all Parisian; the frescoed walls Italian." Of a Milanese house she writes, "I have seen no hotel in Paris more Parisian than the residence of the amiable Duchess of Visconti."

Two pedestals belonging to a set of four, and a pedestal table illustrated in Figures 462 and 464, are parts of a large salon set including console tables, settee, and chairs, that has been ascribed to Piranesi, but this attribution is difficult to support. It is true other members of the set are in this master's fantastic style yet upon analyzing the pieces illustrated they have much in common with early nineteenth century work. For example, the structure with pedestal resting on triangular bases is a familiar one of the Empire type, while all the motifs, as well as the tapering shaft crowned with a female head and ending in feet and drapery,

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were constantly used in the work of the first and second decade of the century. The sides of the top, however, are carved with a design suggestive of the Piranesi fantasies; the husk swags on the shafts are also reminiscent, but, as has been stated, in the majority of the earlier examples of the Italian Empire style the tendency to retain motifs of the previous style is apparent. The pedestals, like the table, are painted in tones of yellow, green, and red.

The palace chairs of this period were as a rule pretentious and unsuccessful interpretations of French models. Painted, partly gilded, and richly upholstered, they were often, as in Figures 467 and 468, more pleasing in detail than in general composition. Both examples mentioned, dating about 1812-14, are from the Borghese Palace and show prevailing forms with their corresponding decoration. Stiff bands of carving were generally used on the legs instead of flutings, while the arms were supported on members either turned or formed of grotesque fantasies.

The swan, a favourite motif with the early nineteenth century cabinet-maker, was prominent in the design of chairs. Besides forming ends of sofas as in Figure 472 they were used as supporting members of arm chairs, often in highly pleasing manner, as seen in Figures 473 and 474. Both are Neapolitan examples in the popular white and gold scheme. Figure 471, a Tuscan model, retains the tradition of the eighteenth century style in its more delicate fluted legs and seat rail, though its winged arms ending in foliated scrolls place it in the period after 1810. It is entirely gilded.

Prevailing French motifs appeared almost contemporaneously in Italian work, yet they were less varied in their military aspect and modified considerably by a more refined selection of classic ornament. In France each successive phase of Napoleon's career brought out new ideas in decoration. With the Republic there appeared fasces, lictor's axes, Phrygian caps, oak and laurel crowns; with the Napoleonic campaigns, the various implements and trophies of war, rooms being actually designed as tents. It was the Egyptian campaign that ushered in Sphinxes, heads of Isis, winged globes,

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imitation hieroglyphics, lotus capitals and vases, these being followed by an ephemeral Turkish fashion. It is true that many of these motifs are met with in Italy, but always in a less aggressive manifestation.

Perhaps the most pleasing chairs and sofas are those built on antique curule forms. Often of simple design, they depend upon their graceful lines for decoration, as in the examples illustrated in Figures 475 and 476. The sofa, which comes from the apartments of Pauline Borghese in the Borghese Palace, is of mahogany with inlaid lines and has feet of gilded bronze. The back is formed of the shaped and fitted cushions which rest against the wall. Like much of the furniture and decorations done for this Bonaparte Princess it rivals in taste and style the most beautiful work of Paris. Bearing one of the proudest names in the Roman aristocracy, Pauline Borghese, longing to live in Paris where she was in her element, putting to shame the extravagance of Josephine, succeeded in making a Parisian environment of her Italian palace and villas. For, after all, the most important part of her life was spent at Rome where her rule was absolute in the realm of art and fashion. A regal suite of rooms was decorated for her in the Borghese palace. One salon was lined with mirrors on which were painted trellises of leaves, twining and intersecting the glass, with birds and flowers interspersed. Pictures by the best masters, antique sculpture from the famous Borghese collection as well as the works of Canova, were incorporated into the schemes of decoration. The villa at Frascati and the charming Villa Pauline, formerly the Villa Serana Colonna, close to the Porta Pia, were also redecorated for her. On her second visit to Rome Miss Berry writes of the last named villa: "It has been completely changed within and without. The inside is in the French style *a merveille*." These were luxurious and extravagant days in Rome. The "ponderous old furniture" and the Rococo that had given way to the Louis Seize style now yielded to the Empire mode with its stiff chairs and settees, console tables, great mirrors, and crystal chandeliers—fit backgrounds for the Empire costumes adopted by Roman society. It was indeed the reign of the Bonapartes and at Rome, after Paris, they made their greatest

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display. Madame Letizia, the mother of the family, was finally installed at the Palazzo Rusticucci dall'Asti. Her brother, Cardinal Fesch, lived in the Palazzo Falconieri; and Lucian Bonaparte, Pauline's favourite brother, with whom she spent much time, led a gay existence at the Villa Ruffinella, near Frascati, giving parties in imitation of Watteau pictures. Later, Queen Hortense, Josephine's daughter, was added to the ranks; she lived at the Ruspoli palace and gave magnificent balls.

Wherever the Bonapartes established themselves the new mode became quite universal. Not only at Rome, Milan, Naples, and Lucca did the Empire style flourish, but also at Mantua. Napoleon himself ushered in the period at Mantua while he was accomplishing the downfall of the Venetian Republic. In the Reggia is still to be seen some of the most beautiful work of the time. The Viceroy, Prince Eugène Beauharnais, who resided in this ancient palace, had some of the large ducal rooms remodeled, destroying decorations that had existed from the time of Isabella d'Este and blending others, especially the magnificent ceilings, with Empire work in a surprisingly harmonious manner. The Appartamento dell' Imperatrice, consisting of four chambers and several smaller rooms, still retains much of the Empire furnishings, most notable among these being the magnificent white and gold bed hung with curtains of blue silk. In another chamber there is a smaller bed with green silk curtains hanging from a gilded dome, while in the "Hall of Arches" the walls are embellished with an architectural scheme *en grisaille*, dating from this time.

Figure 479, one of a pair of unusually small chairs of low proportions, dates a few years earlier. Its turned and fluted legs and general simplicity of outline show it to be contemporary with the Directory in France. Its colour scheme, also by no means typical of the Empire, is in light tones of blue and red combined with gold. The silk covers of the back and seat, combining the colours of the frame, are original.

From Lombardy, Tuscany, and Emilia come a prodigious number of walnut arm and side chairs, dating from the first decades of the century, that display a diversity of open back patterns, in which are combined

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motifs of the French Directoire and those of the Italian neo-classic school. A representative group is given in Figure 483; those of the top row are the earliest, the first chair having the character of a provincial Louis Seize model. The others are common types dating from 1800 to 1820. Less provincial in character are those seen in Figures 489, 490, 491, and 492, also dating from the early nineteenth century. They represent the popular way in which chairs of better quality were finished, Figure 489 being painted light blue with decorations of gold, Figure 491, with a thick mahogany stain, has lines and rosettes of gold, while Figure 492 is of walnut with gilded carving. The finer models had upholstered seats covered with silk or damask, while the provincial ones were with seats of rush and cane.

As in former epochs ormolu mounts by no means prevailed. In this period, however, they were more extensively used to embellish chests of drawers, cabinets, beds, and a few tables, chairs being rarely ornamented in this way. Part of a bed-room suite notable for its unusually well-sculptured mounts is illustrated in Figures 508, 510, and 512. It is finished in walnut and probably came from Lombardy. The beds are designed in the same way.

Thoroughly Italian in spirit is the four-post bed with an elaborate canopy, unfortunately shorn of its hangings, illustrated in Figure 500. This is one of the painted type following the white and gold scheme that was perhaps the most commonly used.

Somewhat earlier is the Florentine bed shown in Figure 498. Its Directoire structure and its antique motifs rendered in various colours on a rich cream ground date about 1800. Much painted furniture of the kind was produced at Florence where a school of decoration, influenced by Poccetti and Vasari as well as by the art of Pompeii, was flourishing. Carlo Lasino (1757-1839) who worked chiefly at Florence, issued many engravings of arabesques in the Raphaelesque and ancient style that added to the amount of available material. Though directly inspired by these various sources, the work of this period has been much

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stiffened and chilled in transition, less well-filled spaces and a lack of rhythm producing a more spotted, though often pleasing, effect.

Iron beds constructed in the modern manner had been used in Italy since the sixteenth century. The earliest of these were often constructed with high ornamental posts topped with wrought-iron and gilded ornaments and high head pieces decorated correspondingly. Occasionally one was found with a short canopy over the head. Beginning with the eighteenth century canopies like that shown in Figure 503 were used. This one is in a style retained from the eighteenth century, but the design of the head and foot pieces incorporates popular Italian Empire motifs. The frame is painted black and the ornaments are gilded.



FIG. 513. BED WITH ORMOLU MOUNTS, ROME, ABOUT 1815
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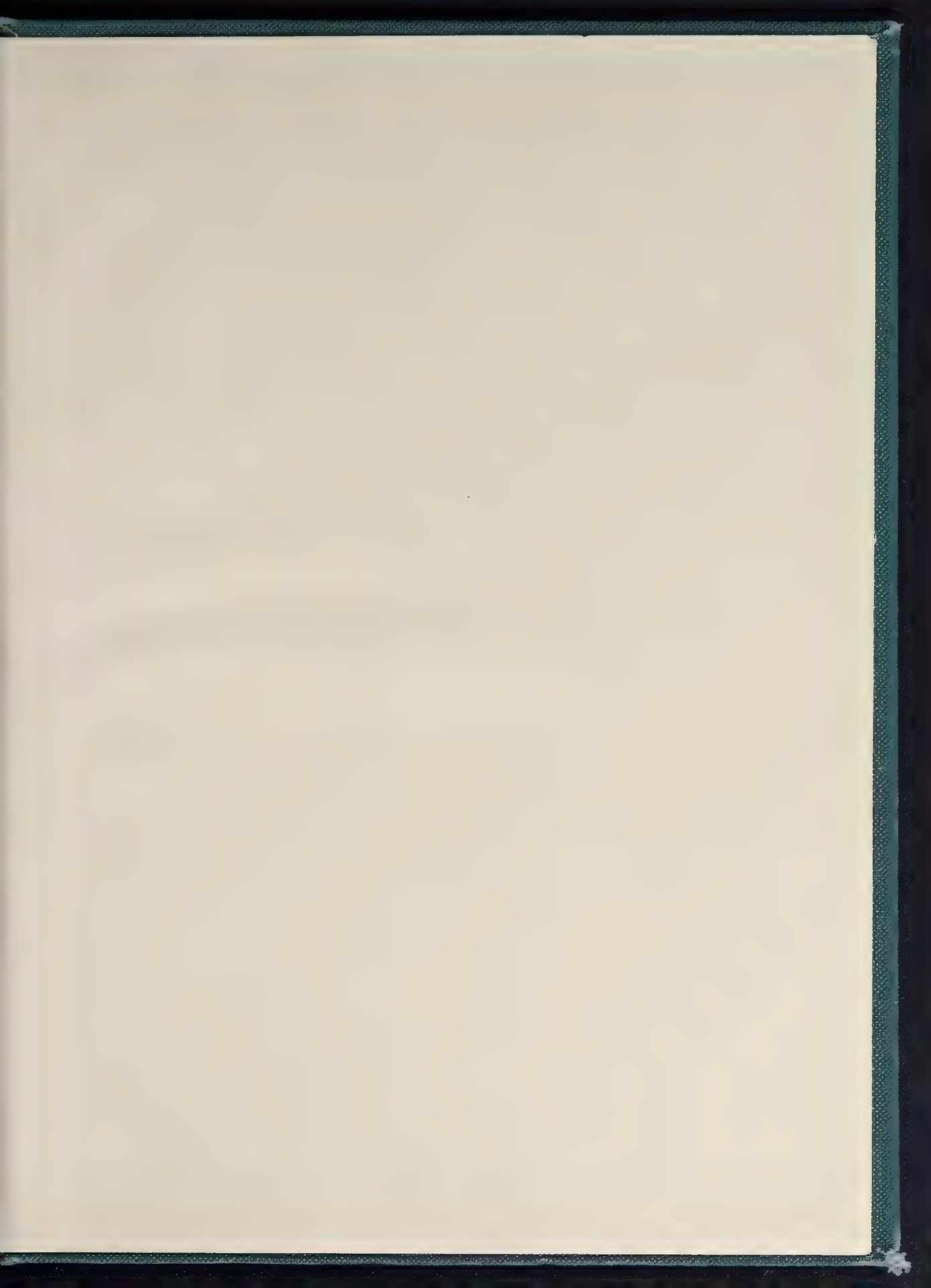
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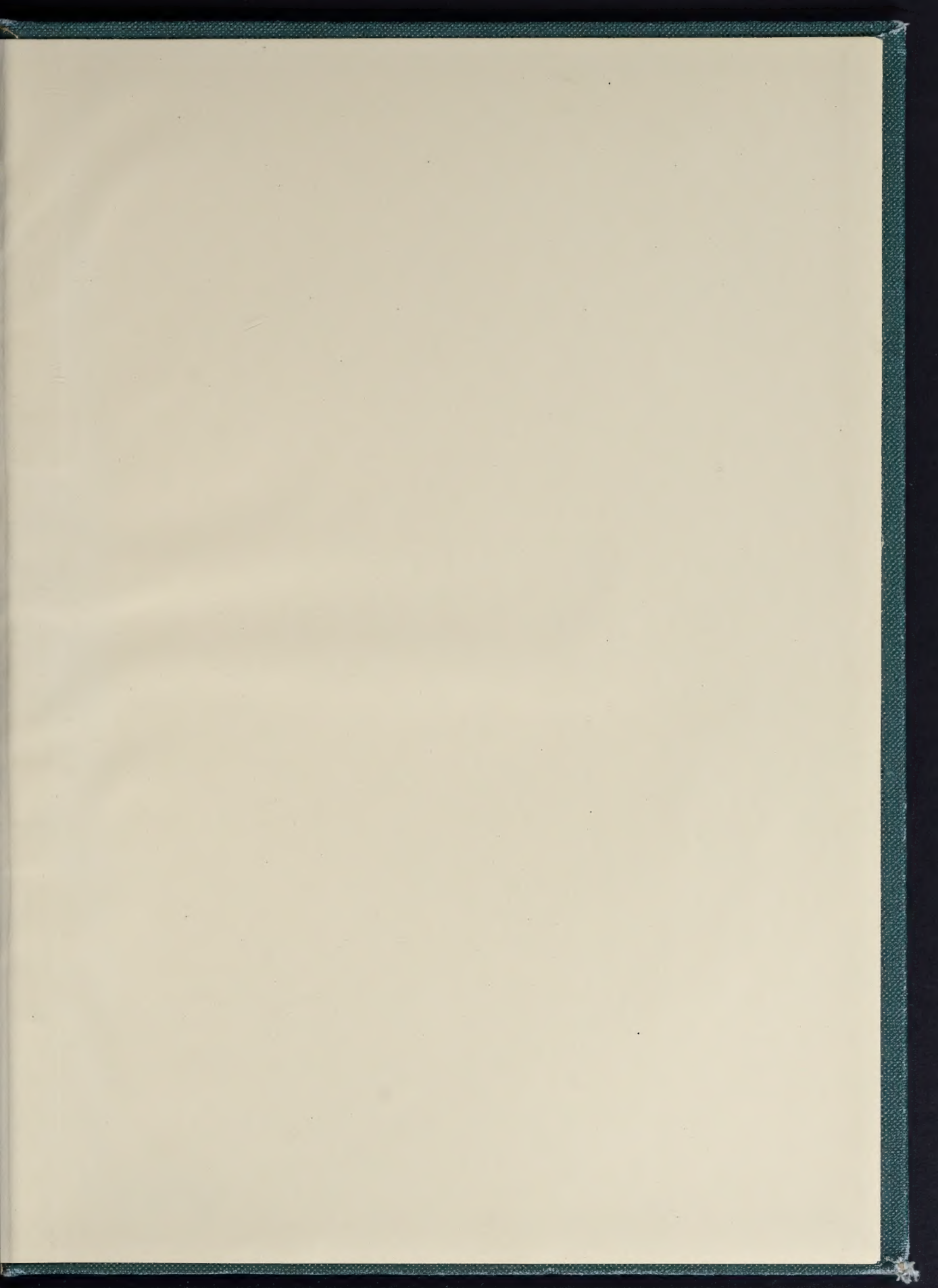
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